



NATIONAL  
GEOGRAPHIC

# HISTORY

## APOCALYPSE MEDIEVAL VISIONS OF THE END OF THE WORLD

MUMMY MASKS  
FACING DEATH IN  
ANCIENT EGYPT

TIMBUKTU  
TREASURE CITY  
OF THE DESERT

THE REAL DRACULA  
FROM VLAD TO VAMPIRE

PLUS:

Sweden's 1,500-Year-Old Mystery  
Massacre at Sandby Borg



VISIT...

LANZAROTE  
*Caliente*.COM



# TEARS FROM A VOLCANO

*Uniquely American stone ignites romance*

On May 18, 1980, the once-slumbering Mount St. Helens erupted in the Pacific Northwest. It was the most impressive display of nature's power in North America's recorded history. But even more impressive is what emerged from the chaos... a spectacular new creation born of ancient minerals named Helenite. Its lush, vivid color and amazing story instantly captured the attention of jewelry connoisseurs worldwide. You can now have four carats of the world's newest stone for an absolutely unbelievable price.

Known as America's emerald, Helenite makes it possible to give her a stone that's brighter and has more fire than any emerald without paying the exorbitant price. In fact, this many carats of an emerald that looks this perfect and glows this green would cost you upwards of \$80,000. Your more beautiful and much more affordable option features a perfect teardrop of Helenite set in gold-covered sterling silver suspended

from a chain accented with even more verdant Helenite.

**Limited Reserves.** As one of the largest gemstone dealers in the world, we buy more carats of Helenite than anyone, which lets us give you a great price. However, this much gorgeous green for this price won't last long. Don't miss out. Helenite is only found in one section of Washington State, so call today!

**Romance guaranteed or your money back.** Experience the scintillating beauty of the *Helenite Teardrop Necklace* for 30 days and if she isn't completely in love with it send it back for a full refund of the item price. You can even keep the stud earrings as our thank you for giving us a try.

**EXCLUSIVE  
FREE**  
**Helenite Earrings**  
-a \$129 value-  
with purchase of  
Helenite Necklace



Helenite Teardrop Necklace (4 1/4 ctw) ~~\$299~~\* ..... Only \$129 +S&P

Helenite Stud Earrings (1 ctw) ..... \$129 +S&P

**Helenite Set** (5 1/4 ctw) ~~\$428~~\* ..... Call-in price only \$129 +S&P  
(Set includes necklace and stud earrings)

Call now and mention the offer code to receive FREE earrings.

**1-800-333-2045**

Offer Code HEN389-01

You must use the offer code to get our special price.

**Stauer®** 14101 Southcross Drive W., Ste 155, Dept. HEN389-01,  
Burnsville, Minnesota 55337 [www.stauer.com](http://www.stauer.com)



\* Special price only for customers using the offer code versus the price on [Stauer.com](http://Stauer.com) without your offer code.

- 4 1/4 ctw of American Helenite and lab-created DiamondAura®
- Gold-finished .925 sterling silver settings
- 16" chain with 2" extender and lobster clasp

Limited to the first  
1600 orders  
from this  
ad only

*4 carats of  
shimmering  
Helenite*



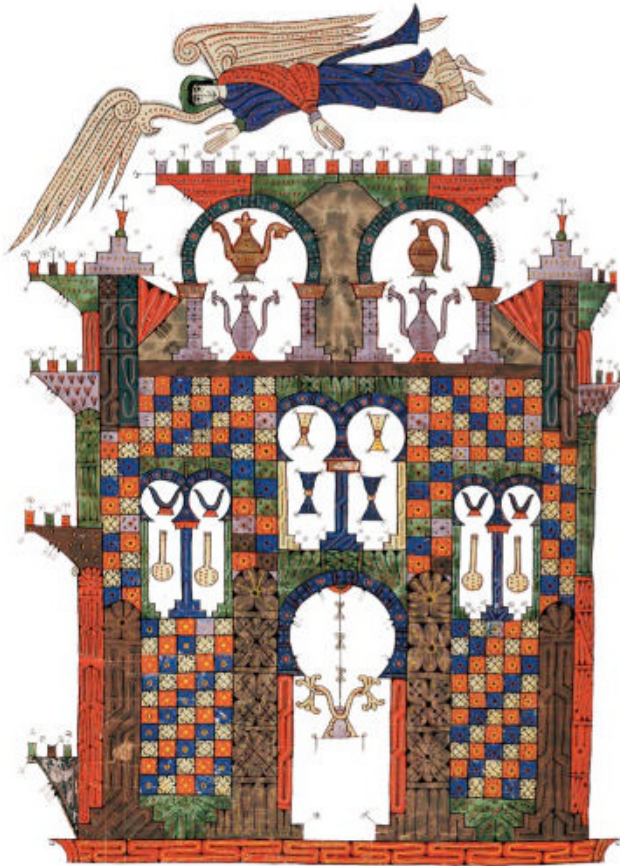
*"I love these pieces... it  
just glowed...  
so beautiful!"*

— S.S., Salem, OR

Necklace  
enlarged  
to show  
luxurious  
color

Stauer... *Afford the Extraordinary.®*





The “stuff as dreams are made on” is among Shakespeare’s most beautiful, evocative phrases and perhaps the polar opposite of the Book of Revelation, which I would describe as pure nightmare fuel. Filled with beasts, blood, and a bottomless pit (among other horrors), the text is what historian Elaine Pagels has called both the “strangest” and “most controversial” book in the Bible.

Written around A.D. 98, Revelation foretells the end of the world, and many scholars believe the author was a war survivor, John of Patmos, who witnessed Roman forces destroy Jerusalem in A.D. 70. The text can be interpreted not only as a spiritual work but also as a contemporary condemnation of Roman power. The city of Babylon and all its evil creatures symbolize Rome and its emperors, and their destruction expresses John of Patmos’s hopes that Jerusalem will be avenged and Rome punished.

There’s no disputing Pagels’s assertions about the Book of Revelation. It is strange and continues to be controversial, but seeing it as a testimony to the horrors of war grounds the text, humanizing its monsters to bring them out of the realm of nightmares and into the annals of history.

*Amy Briggs*  
Amy Briggs, Executive Editor



# PROTECT YOUR LEGACY ENSURE HIS FUTURE



PHOTO: Michael Nichols

COPYRIGHT 2021 NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY

## PLAN NOW. PROTECT YOUR LEGACY. PRESERVE OUR HISTORY.

For many of us, creating or updating our will is one of those tasks that often falls to the bottom of the pile. **You owe it to yourself and your family to be prepared.** When you leave a gift to the National Geographic Society in your will or trust, or by beneficiary designation, you can protect your family and preserve history for generations to come.

**We believe all people deserve access to estate planning tools.** That's why we are making this free to our supporters: [www.givingdocs.com/national-geographic/](https://www.givingdocs.com/national-geographic/). Claim your account today!

**Explore Your Legacy** with the National Geographic Society today. Contact us toll-free at (800) 226-4438 or email us at [legacy@ngs.org](mailto:legacy@ngs.org) for assistance.





## BIRTHPLACE OF DRACULA

Sighisoara in Transylvania, Romania, is believed to be the birthplace of Vlad III of Wallachia, an inspiration for Bram Stoker's *Dracula*.

## Features

### 20 Egypt's Masks of Death

Across the millennia, ancient Egyptians of all ranks—both kings and commoners—regarded a personalized funerary mask as an essential part of their last rites, resulting in a fabulous array of different artistic styles.

### 34 God Save the Queens?

Some were heroes, others were villains, but the Old Testament's royal women played important parts in some of the Bible's most famous stories, from the heresy of Jezebel to the bravery of Esther.

### 46 Visions of the End

As Islam overwhelmed eighth-century Spain, a monk's commentary on the Book of Revelation and the Apocalypse inspired some of the most stunning illuminated manuscripts of the medieval period.

### 68 The Golden Age of Timbuktu

The African city of Timbuktu, enriched by trade in salt and gold, transformed itself from a nomads' camp to a cosmopolitan center of learning, with mosques and libraries housing countless manuscripts from all over the world.

### 82 Vlad the Impaler

The brutality of Vlad III of Wallachia—an inspiration for Count Dracula—was forged by a 15th-century clash between the Kingdom of Hungary and the Ottoman Empire.



SILVER GILT BROOCH FOUND AT SANDBY BORG, SWEDEN, FIFTH CENTURY

## Departments

### 6 NEWS

#### The unearthing of a city near Luxor, Egypt, reveals

startling new information about life in a pharaoh's capital 34 centuries ago.

### 8 PROFILES

#### Antonin Carême, the world's first celebrity chef, created lavish fare

for kings, while his innovative cookbooks brought haute cuisine to the masses.

### 12 DAILY LIFE

#### In 1848 the Fox sisters claimed to talk to the dead. The spiritualist

movement they inspired rattled tables and rattled skeptics across the U.S. and Europe.

### 16 ENIGMAS

#### A deadly beast rampaged through rural France in the 1760s, killing

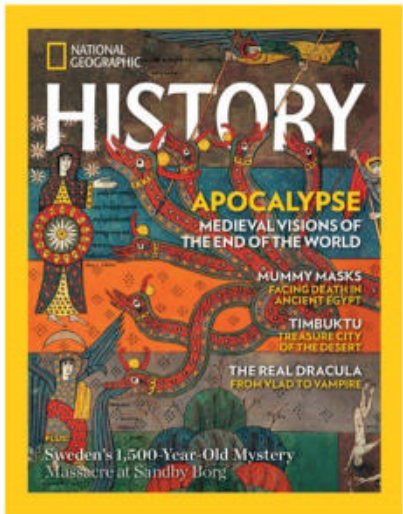
dozens of people. Theories on the monster's true identity abound, but the jury is still out.

### 92 DISCOVERIES

#### Archaeologists are playing detective at Sandby Borg

to solve the mystery of the massacre that took place there roughly 1,500 years ago.





M. MOLEIRO



# HISTORY

---

**EXECUTIVE EDITOR** AMY E. BRIGGS

---

**Deputy Editor** JULIUS PURCELL

**Editorial Consultants** JOSEP MARIA CASALS (Managing Editor, *Historia* magazine),

IÑAKI DE LA FUENTE (Art Director, *Historia* magazine),

VICTOR LLORET BLACKBURN (Editorial consultant and contributor)

**Design Editor** FRANCISCO ORDUÑA

**Photography Editor** MERITXELL CASANOVAS

**Contributors**

JEREMY BERLIN, TONI CABRE, ADAM ISENBERG, BRADEN PHILLIPS,

SEAN PHILPOTTS, SARAH PRESANT-COLLINS, THEODORE A. SICKLEY,

JANE SUNDERLAND, ROSEMARY WARDLEY

---

**VICE PRESIDENT AND GENERAL MANAGER** JOHN MACKETHAN

---

**Advertising** ROB BYRNES

**Consumer Marketing and Planning** JINA CHOI, ANDREW DIAMOND,

KEVIN FOWLER, SUZANNE MACKAY, KATHERINE M. MILLER,

ROCCO RUGGIERI, JOHN SCHIAVONE, SUSAN SHAW,

MARK VIOLA, MELISSA XU, JANET ZAVREL

**Production Services** JAMES ANDERSON, JULIE IBINSON, KRISTIN SEMENIUK

**Customer Service** SCOTT ARONSON, TRACY PELT, CHRISTINA SHORTER

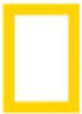
FOR SUBSCRIPTION QUESTIONS, VISIT [www.nghservice.com](http://www.nghservice.com) OR CALL 1-800-647-5463.

TO SUBSCRIBE ONLINE, VISIT [www.nationalgeographic.com](http://www.nationalgeographic.com).

FOR CORRECTIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS, VISIT [natgeo.com/corrections](http://natgeo.com/corrections).

WHILE WE DO NOT ACCEPT UNSOLICITED MATERIALS, WE WELCOME YOUR COMMENTS

AND SUGGESTIONS AT [history@natgeo.com](mailto:history@natgeo.com).



## NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

**EDITORIAL DIRECTOR, NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC PARTNERS** SUSAN GOLDBERG

**EVP & GM, MEDIA GROUP, NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC PARTNERS** DAVID E. MILLER

**CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER, NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC PARTNERS** AKILESH SRIDHARAN

**DEPUTY CHIEF COUNSEL, NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC PARTNERS** EVELYN T. MILLER

COPYRIGHT © 2021 NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC PARTNERS, LLC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC AND YELLOW BORDER DESIGN ARE TRADEMARKS OF THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY, USED UNDER LICENSE. PRINTED IN U.S.A.

## RBA

**PRESIDENT** RICARDO RODRIGO

**EDITOR** ANA RODRIGO

**CORPORATE MANAGING DIRECTOR** JOAN BORRELL

**MANAGING DIRECTOR** ÁUREA DÍAZ

**EDITORIAL DIRECTOR** ISMAEL NAFRÍA

**INTERNATIONAL EXECUTIVE EDITOR** SOLEDAD LORENZO

**EDITORIAL COORDINATOR** MÓNICA ARTIGAS

**MARKETING DIRECTOR** BERTA CASTELLET

**CREATIVE DIRECTOR** JORDINA SALVANY

*National Geographic History* (ISSN 2380-3878) is published bimonthly in January/February, March/April, May/June, July/August, September/October, and November/December by National Geographic Partners, LLC, 1145 17th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036. Volume 7, Number 4. \$34 per year for U.S. delivery. Periodicals postage paid at Washington, DC, and additional mailing offices. **SUBSCRIBER:** If the Postal Service alerts us that your magazine is undeliverable, we have no further obligation unless we receive a corrected address within two years. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to *National Geographic History*, P.O. Box 37545, Boone, IA, 50037. In Canada, agreement number 1000010298, return undeliverable Canadian addresses to *National Geographic History*, P.O. Box 819 STN Main, Markham, ON L3P 9Z9.





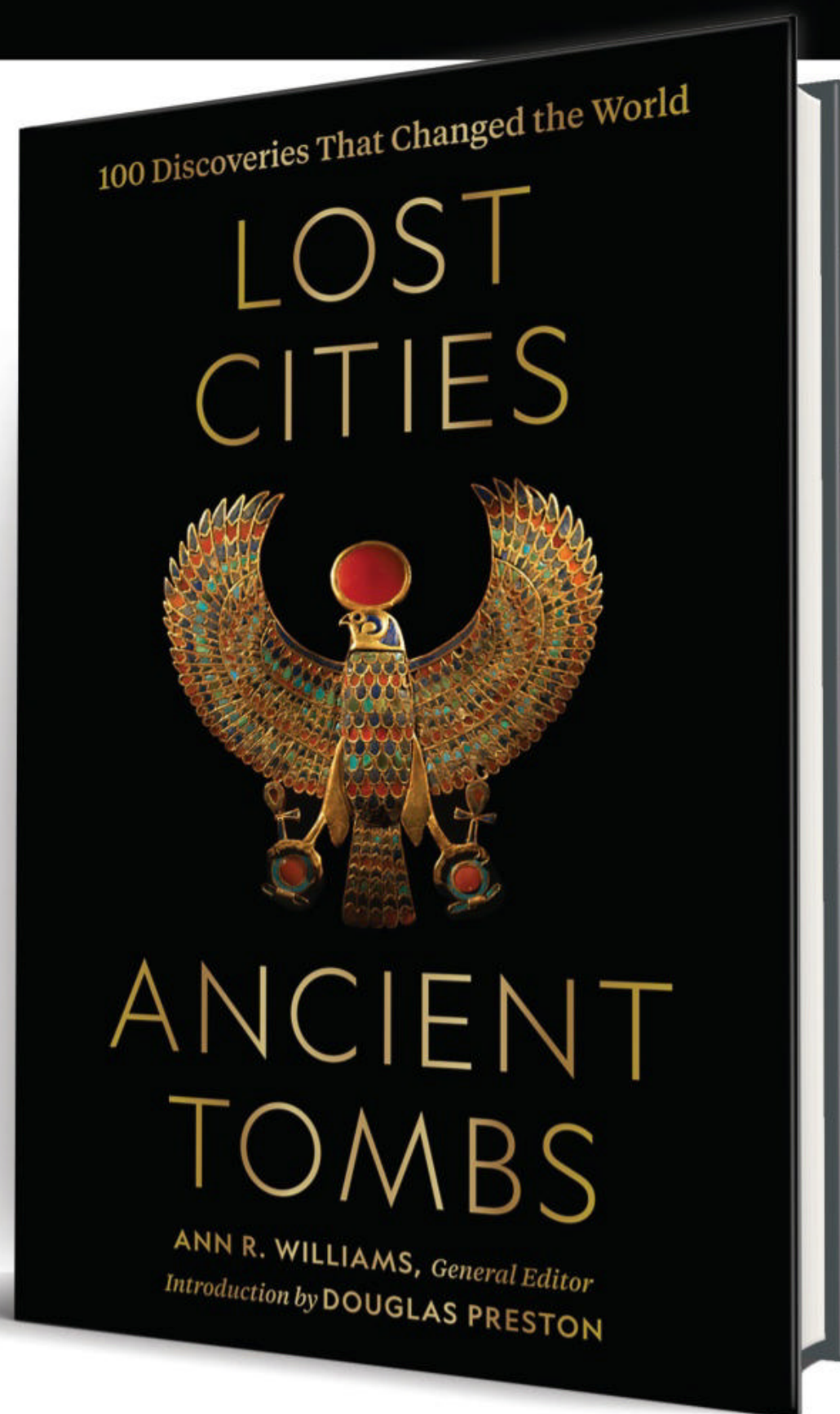
# DIG INTO THE PAST

---

Blending high adventure with history, this chronicle of 100 astonishing discoveries depicts the explorers and archaeologists who uncovered the story of human civilization.

Piecing together clues from ruined cities, cryptic inscriptions, treasure troves, and shipwrecks found across the world, this illuminating narrative from National Geographic spans six continents and more than three million years of history to offer an intimate glimpse into humanity's most important turning points.

---



**AVAILABLE NOVEMBER 2, 2021,  
WHEREVER BOOKS ARE SOLD**

 NatGeoBooks

 @NatGeoBooks

 **NATIONAL  
GEOGRAPHIC**

© 2021 National Geographic Partners, LLC





**PHARAOH AMENHOTEP III** (ca 1390-1353 B.C.) ruled Egypt when the recently unearthed city was at its peak. His reign is known for many well-funded building projects, such as his palace complex at Malkata and his mortuary temple at Luxor. These projects required a steady flow of goods and provisioning that the recently discovered city supplied.

**BUST OF AMENHOTEP III, 14TH CENTURY B.C. CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART**  
LEONARD C. HANNA, JR. FUND/BRIDGEMAN



**SNAKING WALLS** OF MUD BRICK SURROUND THE NEWLY DISCOVERED CITY NEAR LUXOR, EGYPT, WHICH LAY BURIED AND WELL PRESERVED FOR NEARLY 3,400 YEARS.

ZAHY HAWASS



**EXCAVATIONS** of what proved to be a sprawling metropolis began in September 2020 on the west bank of the Nile near Luxor, some 300 miles south of Cairo. The site is located between the temples of Ramses III and Amenhotep III.

## SECRETS IN THE SANDS

# Egyptian City Found After 3,400 Years Underground

An ancient industrial center's discovery is shedding new light on everyday life in Egypt and a religious crisis that shook the throne.

**T**he recent unearthing of an ancient Egyptian industrial center has been hailed as the biggest find in the region since the discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb nearly a century ago.

Located on the west bank of the Nile near Luxor in southern Egypt, the well-preserved city is packed with artifacts

that researchers are hoping will reveal new insights into everyday life in the New Kingdom more than 3,000 years ago.

Bounded by undulating mud brick walls, the sprawling city is believed to have served the nearby capital of Thebes and a nearby palace complex, Malkata, built for the reigning pharaoh, Amenhotep III.



**A SEAL** (ABOVE) FOUND AT THE NEWLY DISCOVERED CITY REFERS TO ATEN, WHOSE WORSHIP FLOURISHED UNDER AKHENATEN.

ZAHY HAWASS





With his royal wife Tiye, the pharaoh ruled between circa 1391 and 1353 B.C., a time of great wealth and splendor.

### Telltale Hieroglyphics

The first signs of the as yet unnamed city were found while searching for the mortuary temple of Tutankhamun. After excavations had begun, archaeologists were delighted to find rooms packed with everyday objects that gave context to what the structure might have been: homes, bakeries, civic centers, or metal and glass workshops.

One object found there, a small clay seal, has already revealed an intriguing nugget

of information about Aten, the solar deity whose cult would convulse ancient Egypt during the reign of Akhenaten, Amenhotep III's son. The clay seal bears hieroglyphs that mean "The Aten is found living in truth."

Project director Zahi Hawass believes the find boosts the theory that Amenhotep III and Queen Tiye instigated moderate worship of Aten: "I think Amenhotep III made his son believe in Aten," he said.

Following Amenhotep's death, Akhenaten overturned the Egyptian pantheon in favor of worshipping Aten alone. In the fifth year of his reign, Akhenaten moved his

## IMPORTANCE OF EVERYDAY OBJECTS

**EVERYDAY ARTISANS** lived in the recently discovered metropolis, and their belongings are poised to give great insight into their lives. Project director Zahi Hawass believes "the discovery of the city will enrich our knowledge of the life of the artisans and workmen who made all the beautiful artifacts for the temples and palaces during the golden age of Amenhotep III." So far, the town consists of three main districts: administrative, industrial, and residential. The industrial spaces included workshops for making garments and sandals as well as glass and metal workshops. There were studios for crafting amulets and small statues. The area for butchering meat provided clues to help date the city's occupation. One of the jars found has text saying it contained 23 pounds of meat butchered in the courtyard of Kha, the palace director, for Amenhotep III's third jubilee. It is also inscribed with the year 37 in Amenhotep III's reign.



**PIECES OF AN AMULET** (ABOVE). DECORATIVE ITEM FOUND IN THE NEWLY DISCOVERED CITY NEAR LUXOR  
ZAHİ HAWASS

capital from Thebes to the site of Amarna. The industrial center fell into disuse but was not entirely abandoned.

Akhenaten's successor, Tutankhamun—who renounced his father's religious reforms and reinstalled the Egyptian pantheon—moved the capital back to Thebes, which revived the fortunes of the nearby industrial city.

Archaeologists believe the site was occupied as late as the post-Roman period before it was finally abandoned and covered by desert sands. Its remarkable preservation makes it a treasure trove of new knowledge on what life was like for everyday people in the age of Amenhotep III.

—Braden Phillips



# Carême, The World's First Celebrity Chef

Long before Julia Child and Emeril Lagasse, Antonin Carême gained international fame, by cooking for kings and writing cookbooks that brought haute cuisine into the home.

## Sweet Life of a Master Chef

1784

Marie-Antoine (later Antonin) Carême is born into poverty in Paris. Abandoned at age 10, he will find work in a tavern.

1803

Carême opens his own patisserie; within a couple years, he is hired by top diplomat Talleyrand to cook diplomatic banquets.

1810

Carême designs and bakes the wedding cake for the marriage of Napoleon and Marie-Louise of Austria.

1829

Carême draws on his vast experience to start writing his masterpiece, *L'art de la cuisine française*.

1833

Carême dies at age 48. His legacy as a great gastronome, practitioner, and theorist is assured.

From restaurant empires to countless cookbooks to cooking shows, celebrity chefs are everywhere in the modern world. Many credit television with their invention; while TV may have boosted the visibility of celebrity chefs, it did not invent them: 19th-century France did.

In the decades following the French Revolution, Antonin Carême built the world's first culinary empire—with shops, catering for royalty, and best-selling cookbooks. He published his first one in 1815, a combination of the encyclopedic and practical that exemplified his organized approach to cooking. It was the first comprehensive guide to the preparation of many classics of the French repertoire. Like modern-day professional chefs, he combined the roles of artist, scholar, and scientist, all generously garnished with self-promotion.

Carême is best remembered today, however, for his brilliant pastries in the form of buildings and exotic landscapes

made of spun sugar and almond paste, creations called *pièces montées* or *extraordinaires*.

They served as the grandiose centerpieces that were still a requirement on the tables of the postrevolutionary French aristocracy.

Despite such lavish productions, Carême acted as a bridge between the elaborate grand cuisine favored by royalty and the more modern, simpler approach that he formulated for the growing middle class in his cookbooks. Until Carême, no one had used the phrase “You can try this at home.”

### Poverty and Pastry

Born Marie-Antoine in 1784, Carême was one of 25 children in a poor Parisian family. His childhood was overshadowed by the French Revolution. At age 10, he was abandoned by his father who told him: “This will be an age of many fortunes; all that is required to make one is intelligence—and you have that.”

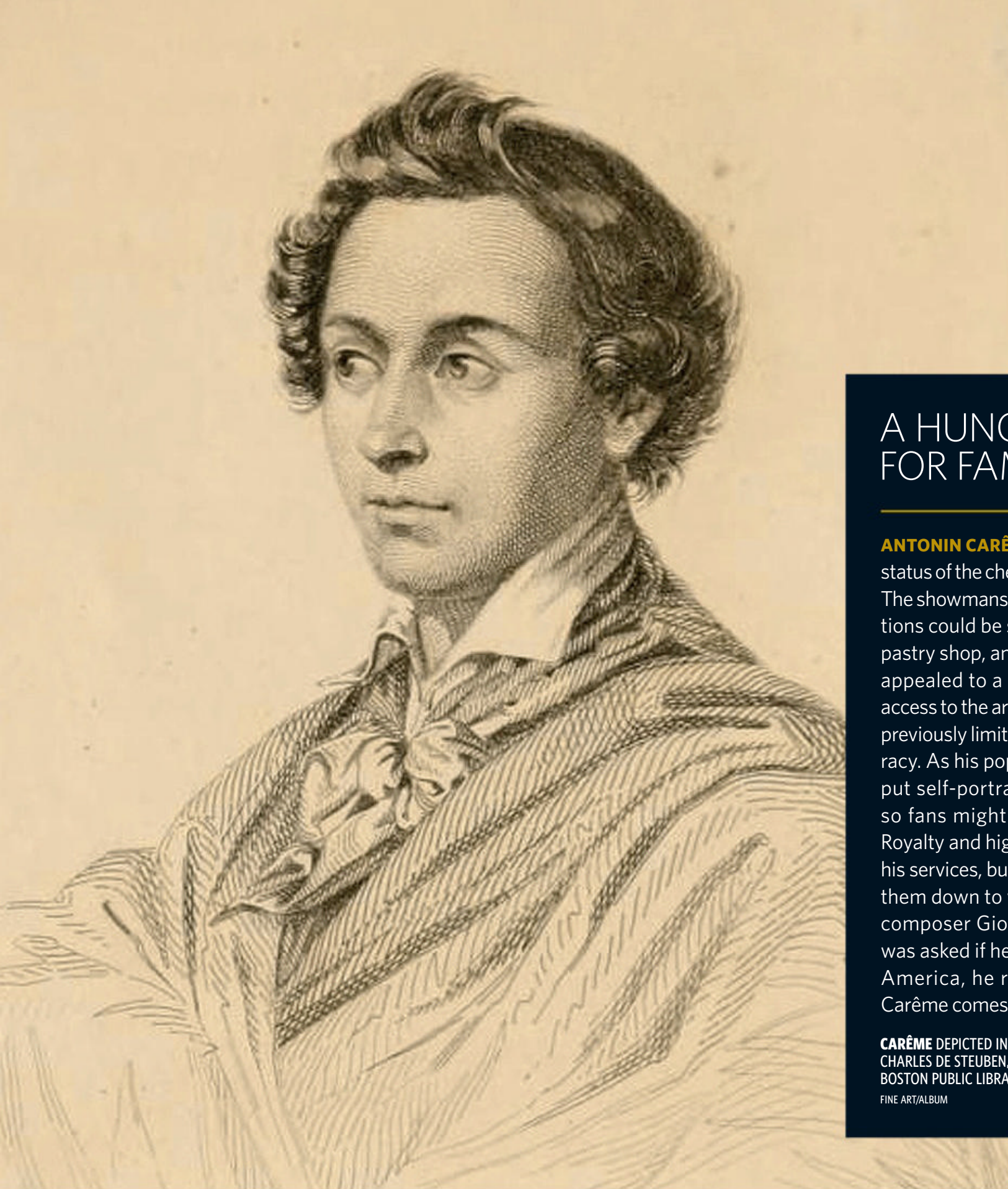
Armed with these words, the young Carême found work in a tavern kitchen in exchange for room and board. That year, 1794, Paris was embroiled in the postrevolutionary period of mass arrests and executions known as the Reign of Terror. Such experiences partly explain why Carême later changed his name from Marie-Antoine to Antonin, ridding



The vol-au-vent, light enough to “fly on the wind,” is one of Carême’s most enduring creations.

**VOL-AU-VENT** IS PUFF PASTRY FILLED WITH SAVORY FLAVORS.  
CAMPILLO RAFAEL/ALAMY





## A HUNGER FOR FAME

**ANTONIN CARÊME** elevated the status of the chef to new heights. The showmanship of his confections could be seen by all at his pastry shop, and his cookbooks appealed to a public eager for access to the art of haute cuisine previously limited to the aristocracy. As his popularity grew, he put self-portraits in his books so fans might recognize him. Royalty and high society bid for his services, but he often turned them down to write. When the composer Gioacchino Rossini was asked if he planned to tour America, he replied, “Only if Carême comes with me.”

**CARÊME** DEPICTED IN A LITHOGRAPH BY CHARLES DE STEUBEN, EARLY 19TH CENTURY. BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

FINE ART/ALBUM

himself of any associations with Queen Marie-Antoinette, who had been guillotined in 1793.

In 1798 Carême left the tavern to become an assistant to Sylvain Bailly, a leading pâtissier. There he mastered pastry techniques, developing his specialty of creating fabulous structures out of confectionery. At night, he taught himself to read and write to feed his insatiable curiosity about not just food but also architecture. Bailly encouraged his visits to the Prints and Engravings Room at the Bibliothèque Nationale, where Carême sketched castles, pyramids, and

fountains, structures that inspired the design of his extraordinaires.

The real stars of French cooking at the time were the confectioners and pâtisseries. Carême was winning admirers among Bailly’s wealthy clients; in 1803, at age 19, he struck out on his own to open his own patisserie on the rue de la Paix. There he invented pastries and sweets that are still popular, especially the vol-au-vent, a puff pastry light enough to “fly on the wind.” Above all, he capitalized on the demand for his extraordinaires, receiving commissions to create pieces that took several days to make.

### A Richer Diet

Among his clients was Charles-Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord, one of the most famous politicians—and gourmands—of the era. Napoleon funded Talleyrand’s purchase of the Château de Valençay outside Paris in 1803 as a place to hold diplomatic gatherings, and Talleyrand later hired Carême, then 21 years old. The job launched the young chef on the international stage. The pâtissier had to prepare not only his extraordinaires but entire banquets. Early on, Carême agreed to present a different menu for every day of the year using only local products.



## WINDOW SHOPPING

**AT AGE 19** Carême opened his first patisserie in Paris on the rue de la Paix. Despite his youth, the shop became a civic landmark with a front window that showcased his ornate confectionery. In parallel with his work for Talleyrand, Carême ran the shop until 1815. Later, as patisseries multiplied in Paris, he attributed their popularity to his influence. “The pastry cooks of the suburbs, having my book in their hands, have not feared to move into the heart of the capital,” he said. Today many pastries Carême is credited with inventing are still sold in bakeries, like the Napoleon cake (or mille-feuille).

**A CUSTOMER** EXAMINES THE CREATIONS AT CARÊME’S SHOP IN AN 1835 ENGRAVING.

AKG/ALBUM



It was the start of a decade-long-plus association with Talleyrand.

While working in the kitchens at Valençay, Carême also took on freelance work as a confectioner in other aristocratic houses, learning from the chefs of the prerevolutionary period. Carême also began his systematic

study of French cuisine, organizing old and new methods into a coherent whole. Most famously, Napoleon commissioned a wedding cake from Carême for his marriage to Marie-Louise of Austria in 1810.

Unlike many colleagues who opened restaurants, Carême stuck with wealthy patrons. Later in his life, he became the world’s most expensive chef (the banker James Mayer de Rothschild would pay

him the equivalent of \$176,000 a year to cook for the Paris elite), but money was never Carême’s sole motivation. He considered that serving a rich patron meant greater creative freedom: “The man born to wealth lives to eat, and sustains the art of the chef,” he wrote.

### Supreme Cuisine

Political change came in 1814 after the downfall of Napoleon. Russia’s Tsar Alexander I and other allies who had defeated Napoleon arrived in Paris to negotiate the war’s end, and Talleyrand asked Carême to cater the affair. The delicious cuisine may have helped Talleyrand secure generous terms under the restored Bourbon dynasty. Carême was happy to take credit: “My cooking was the advance guard of French diplomacy.”

Tsar Alexander I was certainly impressed and sought to lure Carême to St. Petersburg. The chef refused, preferring to see through the publication of his

## CULINARY COUTURE

**CARÊME’S DRAWING** for a chef’s uniform (which may have been a self-portrait) is from his 1822 book *Le maître d’Hotel Français*. It features a clean white coat and a tall hat, or *toque blanche*, made stiffer with a piece of cardboard. He felt the older floppy hats made a chef look dressed for a sickbed. Today’s chef’s uniform remains virtually the same.

**CHEF’S UNIFORM**, ILLUSTRATION FROM THE 1820S BY CARÊME

BRIDGEMAN/ACI







**CARÊME** WORKED IN THE KITCHEN OF THE ROYAL PAVILION, BRIGHTON, ENGLAND, FROM 1816 TO 1817, AS CHEF TO THE PRINCE REGENT, THE FUTURE KING GEORGE IV.

ANGELO HORNAK/ALAMY

first book in 1815, *Le pâtissier royal parisien*, a massive two-volume set of pastry recipes. In addition to writing the recipes, he also drew most of the illustrations. It was quickly followed by *Le pâtissier pittoresque* that included 124 designs for extraordinaires.

In 1816 Carême agreed to join the service of the prince regent of Great Britain, the future King George IV. After a year, he left the post because of a dislike of the English climate and the jealousy of English cooks there. He later traveled to Vienna to work for the British ambassador Charles Stewart, then made a fleeting visit to St. Petersburg, but ultimately decided to return to Paris, where he focused on his writing.

In 1822 he published the two-volume *Le maître d'Hotel Français*, which famously features the four French mother sauces: Allemande (light stock, lemon juice, egg yolks), béchamel (milk thickened with a butter and flour roux), espagnole

(reduced brown stock with tomato sauce), and velouté (light stock thickened with a butter and flour roux). These recipes became the foundation for creating hundreds of different sauces to complement any kind of dish and have served as the building blocks of French cuisine ever since.

Carême turned away many offers to run elite kitchens during this time before he accepted one from James de Rothschild, a banker who wanted to impress French high society. Carême remained in his service from 1823 through 1830; he left the position to return to writing and focus on the work that would be his masterpiece, *L'art de la cuisine française*.

The first part of his five-volume work on French cuisine would be published in 1833 (two of the five volumes were published after his death). *L'art de la cuisine française* introduced principles that many modern cooks would recommend today. Carême rejected the heavily spiced

foods of 18th-century grand cuisine and embraced more natural flavors. He advocated cooking with fresh, seasonal ingredients. His plates were pleasing to the eye with balanced portions and aesthetic presentation. Moreover, he wrote this book not for royalty, but for the wider public. "My book is not written for the great houses alone," he wrote. "I would like every citizen in our beautiful France to be able to eat delicious food."

Carême died on January 12, 1833, believed to be a victim of lung disease from a life spent breathing coal fumes in unventilated kitchens. One of Carême's successors, the better known Auguste Escoffier, played a similar role adapting French cuisine to the 20th century, but gave the original maestro his due: "The fundamental principles of the science (of cooking), which we owe to Carême . . . will last as long as cooking itself."

—Martina Tommasi



# Spiritualism: Communing With the Dead

Séances and spiritualists grew popular across the United States and Europe in the 19th century despite the skeptics.

**T**he desire to communicate with the dead is probably as old as human history. Ghosts played major roles in ancient cosmologies from Mesopotamia to Greece to China, but seeking out the counsel of the departed was outlawed in Judeo-Christian traditions: In several places in the Old Testament, consulting “mediums or necromancers” is expressly forbidden.

For millennia, accusations of communing with spirits could result in punishment and death, but that all changed in the 19th century when spiritualism exploded across the United States and Europe. The massive social and technological changes of the industrial revolution, the ravages of war, and the latest scientific advances all challenged traditional beliefs when it came to communication with the dead.

## A Supernatural Start

The origins of modern spiritualism in the United States can be traced to Hydesville, New York. It was there in 1848, in a house on a lonely crossroads, that Maggie Fox, age 14, and Kate, her 11-year-old sister, held séances that supposedly communicated with the spirit of a peddler murdered in the house five years before.

“If you are an injured spirit, manifest it by three raps,” would come the prompt from one sister, performing before one of their transfixed neighbors. Three raps duly followed. After local demonstrations of their supposed powers, the Fox sisters went on a national tour whose popularity helped the spread of spiritualism across the U.S. and beyond.

This new form of communication with the dead captivated the public because it seemed to marry science with religion. Four years before the Fox sisters began pulling messages out of the air,

## ÉSPRIT DE CORPS

**FRENCHMAN** Allan Kardec founded “spiritism” in the mid-19th century. In contrast with spiritualism, he believed in reincarnation and an immortal soul that progressed toward a divine state. However, like spiritualism, he believed that the living could communicate with that soul after death through mediums.

RUE DES ARCHIVES/ALBUM



**SPIRIT WRITING** and levitating objects highlight this 1887 illustration of the kinds of manifestations experienced at a séance.

ALAMY/ACI

telegraphs had begun sending messages along electrical wires via Morse code. The tapping messages sent from the dead during séances were portrayed by experts as the spiritual equivalent of electronic telegraphy. “Spiritualism attempted to align itself with the principles of ‘electrical science’ so as to distinguish mediumship from more ‘superstitious’ forms of mystical belief in previous centuries,” wrote Jeffrey Sconce in his 2000 book *Haunted Media: Electronic Presence From Telegraphy to Television*.

This “scientific religion” quickly gained followers. It soon spread to Britain, and from there, to the European continent. Believers ranged from rural





dwellers to urban middle classes, to intellectuals, scientists, and aristocrats.

By the 1860s spiritualism was particularly popular in England and France. The Frenchman Allan Kardec developed a variation of spiritualism called “spiritism,” which was distinguished by a belief in reincarnation. His *Spirits’ Book*, published in 1857, was read widely, not only in France but by the 1870s and 1880s, throughout South America and Russia.

In America spiritualism experienced a boom with the Civil War as many of the bereaved turned to séances to contact fallen soldiers. According to one estimate, the war added two million new believers to the spiritualist movement.

# Flotation Devices

**GHOSTLY FLOATING OBJECTS** were common sights at séances in the 19th century. One of the most famous mediums of the era, Daniel Dunglas Home, seemed regularly to feature levitation during his gatherings. In addition to the usual rapping,

musical instruments would play by themselves. In 1854 Home described one of his séances in New York: Attendants heard a guitar rattling in its case and opened it. They put the guitar under the table and soon heard music "not, to be sure, in the highest grade of the art, but with very fair average skill." Home himself was observed levitating. In 1852 an

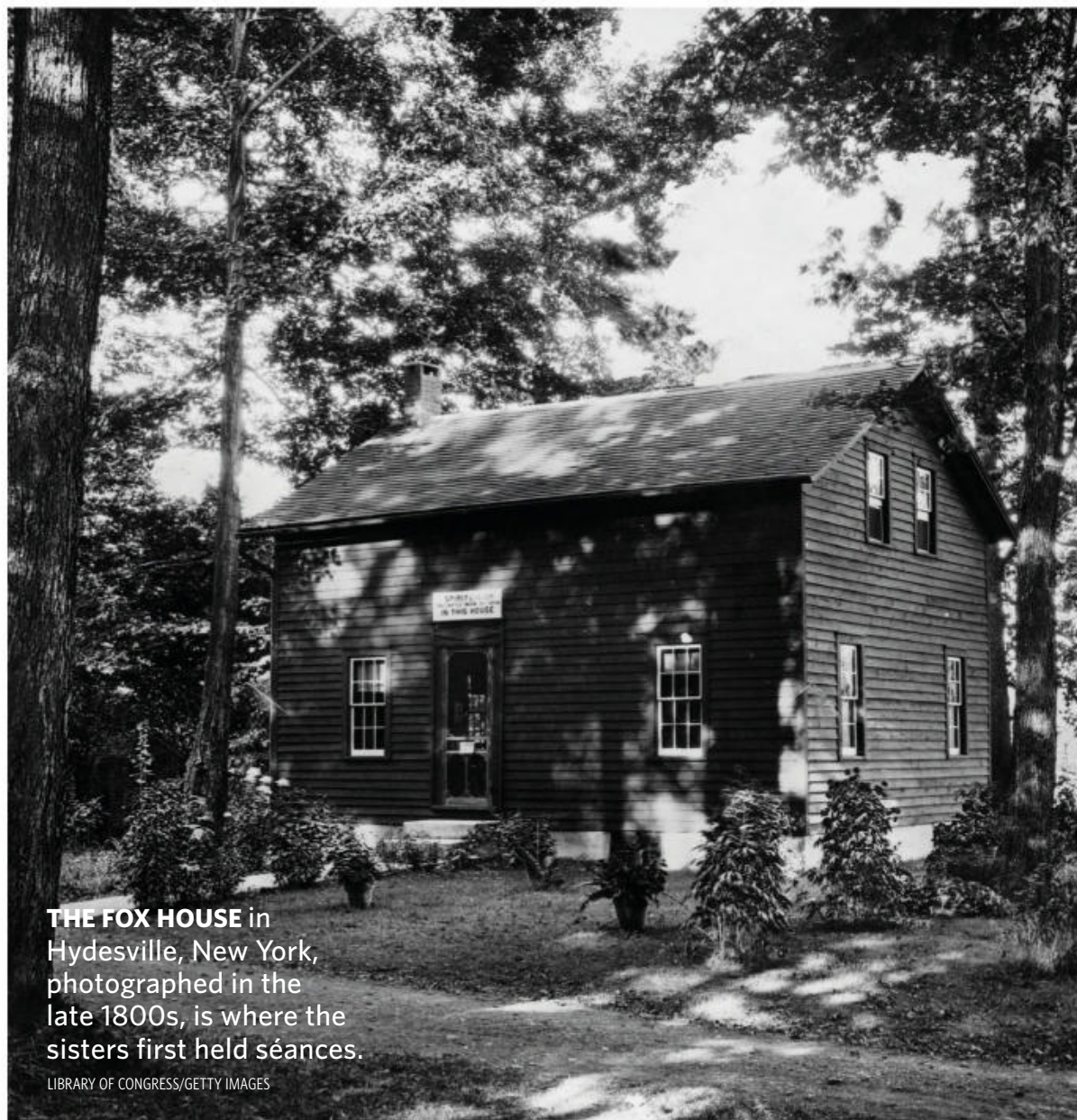
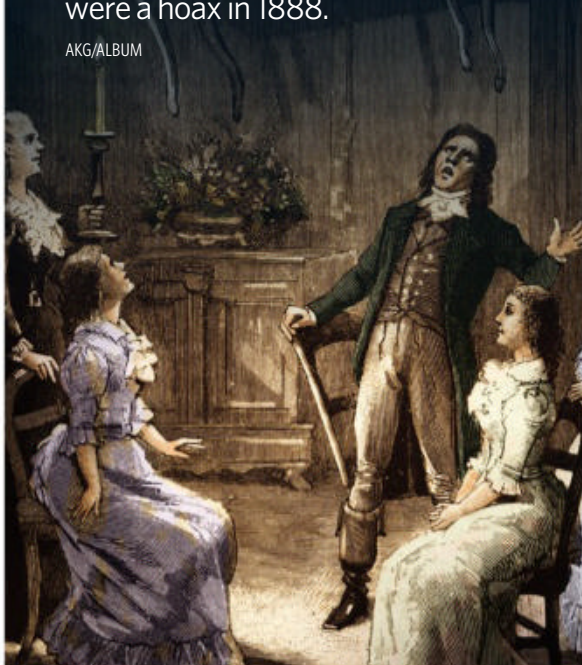
American journalist reported he felt himself rise from the ground (while holding Home's hand) until his head grazed the ceiling. Nobody could pin down how Home created these illusions, but in 1868 he was convicted of fraud by a judge who considered spiritualism "perverse and calculated nonsense used to deceive the vain, weak, and foolish."



## OUTFOXED

**MAGGIE AND KATE FOX** lived in a house in rural New York State reputedly haunted by a murdered peddler. Beginning in 1848, the sisters led séances in which they claimed to communicate with the ghost using tapping sequences. After securing widespread fame, Maggie admitted that the séances were a hoax in 1888.

AKG/ALBUM



**THE FOX HOUSE** in Hydesville, New York, photographed in the late 1800s, is where the sisters first held séances.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS/GETTY IMAGES

By the 1880s the movement had eight million adherents in the United States and Europe. In the first decade of the early 20th century, popular interest in spiritualism waned but was revitalized by the twin devastations of World War I and the Spanish flu pandemic.

### Mediums' Messages

With no churches or formal organization, spiritualism was practiced mostly

in private domestic settings. Many mediums created similar conditions for their séances, with participants sitting around a table in a dimly lit room. Attendees would often hold hands and then wait for signs of paranormal activity. These might be tapping sounds, a breeze on the back of the neck, ringing bells, or moving furniture. Mediums would try to establish contact with the spirit and ask if it was willing to appear.

Spirits would manifest their messages in a variety of ways, according to accounts. Some employed a series of knocks to spell out words following special codes written on paper. Another method was psychography, or automatic

writing: The medium's hand would "unconsciously" write what the spirit wanted to communicate. In pneumatography, or direct writing, the spirit wrote messages without any intermediary.

Some spirits allegedly communicated through the mouth of a spiritualist. The most famous of these so-called trance mediums was the Bostonian Leonora Piper. Piper channeled the famous—including Johann Sebastian Bach—and the obscure, especially a mysterious Frenchman named Dr. Phinuit. Her voices elicited much scientific interest, led by American psychologist William James. In the end, James could not reach a firm conclusion about Piper, allowing for the possibility she could tap into a "cosmic consciousness" that might include spirits.

Interest in the spirit world even crossed over into the burgeoning world of photography. Some photographers claimed to be able to capture images of spirits while photographing the living. American photographer William Mumler



Using techniques such as double exposure, spirit photography appeared to capture ghosts on film.

**SPIRIT PHOTOGRAPHY** WAS ANOTHER WAY TO CONNECT WITH LOVED ONES WHO HAD DIED. PHOTOGRAPH, CIRCA 1900 ALBUM





**EXPOSING** how mediums could ring bells under a table, Houdini (seated, right) revealed spiritualist tricks on stage at the New York Hippodrome in 1925.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS/GETTY IMAGES

is said to be the first person to capture a “spirit” in a photograph in the early 1860s. In one of his most famous photos, the “ghost” of Abraham Lincoln appears behind his wife Mary with his hands resting on her shoulders. Today it is believed he used a double exposure technique to superimpose the “ghost” onto images of his clients. In 1869 Mumler was charged with fraud but acquitted. The accusations ended his career, but spirit photography continued to be popular for decades.

### Overturing the Table

When spiritualism first emerged in the late 1840s, it attracted its fair share of skepticism. In the 1850s British scientist Michael Faraday debunked “table-turning”—an activity in which spirits supposedly moved, tilted, or rapped a table around which participants were seated. Faraday would covertly insulate the table so it could not be affected by so-called electrical or magnetic forces from the spirit world. He then demonstrated that

movement was being generated where participants placed their hands, which strongly suggests that people were unconsciously affecting the table themselves, a phenomenon known as an ideomotor response.

Skeptics also demonstrated mediums’ manipulations: Dim light creates sensitivity to sound, and people under such circumstances become highly suggestible, especially when experiencing grief. The accumulation of such exposés partly prompted Maggie Fox to admit that her and her sister’s séances were a fraud. In 1888 Fox admitted that the rapping sounds were just the sisters’ cracking their knuckles and other joints.

Perhaps the most sensational denunciation of spiritualism was put forward by American escape artist and illusionist Harry Houdini. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the creator of Sherlock Holmes and an avid spiritualist, became friends with Houdini in 1920, and Lady Doyle, a practicing medium, claimed to be producing written

messages from Houdini’s late mother. To Houdini, the letters sounded nothing like his beloved mother, and he publicly denounced spiritualism, which cost him Doyle’s friendship.

Houdini became a dedicated debunker of psychics and mediums. His background as a magician gave him keen insight into the tricks of the trade, which he chronicled in his 1924 book, *A Magician Among the Spirits*. After Houdini’s death on October 31, 1926, his wife Bess practiced yearly Halloween séances to reach him. To weed out frauds, she and her husband created a secret code before his death to use if his spirit was able to reach out from the great beyond. Her séances continued for 10 years, but he never contacted her. Spiritualism’s popularity has greatly waned since the 1920s, but believers still linger, including those who still hold annual Halloween séances in the hopes of contacting Houdini.

—Inés Antón





# Terror in the Countryside: The Beast of Gévaudan

Terror gripped France in the 1760s as a ferocious beast roamed the countryside, killing peasants in the valleys of the Gévaudan region with supernatural strength and stealth.

**J**eanne Boulet, a fourteen-year-old shepherd girl, was tending livestock in the wooded valleys near the Allier River in the Gévaudan region of central southern France one day in June 1764. Her badly injured body was later discovered, the victim of an apparent wolf attack. Her death did not seem unusual at the time. Children often shepherded sheep or cattle by themselves, and wolves were part of the hazards of rural life.

More fatalities like Boulet's followed with severe injuries, dismemberments, and even decapitations. Whatever this deadly creature was, it was far more ferocious than a regular wolf. As whispers of a werewolf began to circulate, the deadly creature became known as *la bête*, the beast. It would terrorize Gévaudan for three years, killing as many as 100 people. Between 1764 and 1767 more than a hundred wolves were killed in Gévaudan, but scholars are still trying to determine if any of them was the deadly beast.

## Savage Attacks

The historic Gévaudan county, situated in the rugged highlands of the Massif Central, straddles France's Auvergne and Languedoc regions. It is a dramatic, forbidding land of dense forests and rain-drenched plateaus. Gévaudan had once been prosperous, but the wars of the 16th century had battered the rural economy. Many locals were extremely poor and subsisted by herding livestock.

After Boulet's death and the following half dozen cases, young shepherds





**ROYAL** huntsman François Antoine kills the wolf believed to be the beast in 1765. Two months later, the beast returned to terrorize France again. 18th-century engraving

AKG/ALBUM



## HUNTING GROUNDS

**THE HISTORICAL** region of Gévaudan, with its capital in the cathedral city of Mende, can be found on old documents (such as the 19th-century map, above). Named for the Celtic Gabali tribe, it now largely corresponds to the modern French *département* of Lozère. In reality, the beast attacked beyond the boundaries of Gévaudan: By early 1765 deaths attributed to it were spread across an area of 700 square miles, which may indicate that there was more than one beast at work—perhaps even a pack.

INSTITUT CARTOGRÀFIC I GEOLÒGIC DE CATALUNYA

banded together in groups, but the beast was not deterred by their numbers. The savage attacks continued, taking the lives of mostly women and children. By the fall of 1764, word of the terrifying monster had spread far beyond Gévaudan to the rest of France.

The beast became a national obsession thanks to the editor of the *Courrier d'Avignon*, François Morénas. The end of the Seven Years' War with Britain in 1763 had caused a news drought for Morénas. Successful in peddling sensationalist stories, Morénas printed stories of the Beast of Gévaudan to boost the newspaper's sales and spread word of the creature around the nation.

These attacks generated dread, which was stoked further by the dramatic reporting of Morénas's correspondents. One such report attributed astonishing swiftness to the beast. Another said that it had the gaze of a devil. Others reported that it possessed the intelligence of a

“wily, robust and skilled gladiator.” In late 1764 Morénas's publication was comparing the beast to the mythical Nemean lion and other terrifying monsters.

Descriptions of the beast often matched characteristics of a canid with other unusual qualities, especially its size. The beast was said to stand as tall as a donkey or bull. Its fur was reddish brown with a dark stripe running down its spine. With six sharp claws on each of its four feet and a long feline tail, the beast was also said to ambush its victims, eat their flesh, and drink their blood.

In addition to horrific accounts of the beast itself, the newspapers also printed

survivors' accounts of their encounters. In January 1765 a group of preteens held the creature at bay with sticks. In another incident in March, Jeanne Jouve fought to protect her three children; one of them, age six, died from his injuries. One of the most famous was Marie-Jeanne Vallet, the “Maiden of Gévaudan” who fought the beast off, wounding it in the chest with a bayonet.

### On the Hunt

For some, the challenge to catch the beast represented a good career move, and a

## France's national obsession with the beast prompted King Louis XV to intervene.

**LOUIS XV**, BUST, PALACE OF VERSAILLES  
DEA/ALBUM







shot at redemption. A local military captain Jean-Baptiste Duhamel recruited thousands of local people to help him hunt down the beast in fall 1764. Based on reports of the long black stripe down its back, Duhamel speculated that the beast was not a wolf, but a big cat: “This animal is a monster whose

father is a lion; it remains open what the mother is.” Despite his best efforts, Duhamel failed to capture the monster.

By early 1765 the continuing Gévaudan drama had attracted the attention of King Louis XV. He rewarded the group of boys who had fought off the beast with sticks and gave their leader a free education. In

March the king sent his own hunters to trap the beast. A renowned Normandy wolf hunter, Jean-Charles Vaumesle d’Enneval, was appointed to head the mission, but he, too, was unsuccessful.

Rattled by his appointee’s lack of progress, Louis XV sent his bodyguard, the veteran soldier François Antoine. On September 21, 1765, Antoine’s men killed a large wolf that they believed to be the beast. The body was sent to Paris, and Antoine was rewarded.

Two months later, however, the attacks resumed. Between December 1765 and June 1767, as many as 30 more fatalities were reported. Fear stalked the Gévaudan once again, except this time, the locals were on their own. Embarrassed by their failure, the authorities paid little attention, and even the newspapers, had lost interest.

On June 19, 1767, local hunter Jean Chastel shot and killed a large animal. From then on, the attacks stopped.



## A LOCAL HERO

**ACCORDING** to local lore, Jean Chastel, hailed as the killer of the beast in 1767, took his trophy to Paris but was snubbed by the king, who had lost interest in the Gévaudan case. It is not certain that such an encounter took place, but it became part of a narrative that pitted brave local heroes against outsiders.

**CHASTEL MONUMENT, LA BESSEYRE-SAINT-MARY, FRANCE**  
ALBUM





Witnesses described the fallen creature as a wolf, but a strange one: It had a “monstrous” head, and a coat of red, white, and gray that hunters had not seen on wolves before.

### Mystery Monsters

For three years, something had been terrorizing the people of the Gévaudan region. As many as 100 lives were lost, although some sources claim the total could be as high as 300. In the following centuries, different explanations have been investigated as to the cause of these horrific deaths. One of the most popular was supernatural in origin: the werewolf. Science has ruled that one out, but the legend lingered for many years, perhaps because of the rumor that Chastel shot the Beast of Gévaudan with a silver bullet.

Recent theorists have speculated that a serial killer could have been at work in Gévaudan who employed some sort of

animal to help them kill their victims; however, most experts think this idea is too far-fetched.

The answers with the most support come from the animal world. Others suggested the beast could have been an escaped creature that was not native to France, like a hyena. Biologist Karl-Hans Taake has recently argued that the beast was an escaped juvenile male lion, whose immature mane would have looked strange to inhabitants of the French countryside. According to Taake, the lion eventually died after eating poisoned bait, which had been placed throughout the Gévaudan region.

Historian Jay M. Smith has proposed a less exotic theory: The “Beast” of Gévaudan was rather likely to be several large wolves. The distorting lens of the press and subsequent national hysteria created the Beast of Gévaudan and the hype that went with it.

Writing more than a century after the last attack, Robert Louis Stevenson (future author of *Treasure Island*) was traveling through Gévaudan and described his dismay at how the world was changing: “This was the land of the ever-memorable Beast, the Napoleon Bonaparte of wolves.” Now that the railroad was arriving, “you may not meet with an adventure worth the name.”

The modern world may have crept into Gévaudan, but the true identity of the beast will most likely never be solved to anyone’s satisfaction, lending a permanent air of mystery to this wild region of the Massif Central.

—Juan José Sánchez Arreseigor

[Learn more](#)

*Monsters of the Gévaudan: The Making of a Beast*  
Jay M. Smith, Harvard University Press, 2011.





# FACING THE AFTERLIFE EGYPTIAN MASKS

For millennia Egyptians mummified their dead to assure them of eternal life. Beautiful masks, sometimes crafted in gold and bearing the features of the deceased, would allow the gods to recognize royals and regulars alike after death.

NÚRIA CASTELLANO





### FANCY FACES

An adult male mummy (left) from the Ptolemaic era has its face intricately wrapped in a design of concentric squares. His mask (above) was made of cartonnage, painted with his likeness, and adorned with a scarab. Louvre Museum, Paris

DEA/SCALA, FLORENCE



**A**ncient Egypt has no shortage of famous icons, from the pyramids to the Great Sphinx at Giza. Perhaps the funerary mask of the boy king Tutankhamun has become the most iconic symbol of a world-shaping civilization that spanned nearly 3,000 years.

The mask—exquisitely crafted and made with the finest materials, including two layers of gold—was forged around 1323 B.C., during the period known as the New Kingdom. In 1922 English archaeologist Howard Carter broke open Tutankhamun's tomb and would go on to find, among other treasures, a face covering bearing an idealized likeness of the young pharaoh.

Tut's was hardly the first Egyptian funerary mask; it was part of a long tradition in ancient Egypt. The first funerary masks were discovered at Hierakonpolis, a settlement in Upper Egypt, south of Thebes. The site had been occupied since roughly 4000 B.C. In the period before Egypt's political unification, it was one of the extant culture's most important trading hubs.

There, in a tomb belonging to members of the social elite, two ceramic masks were found in 1999, each depicting what appears to be a triangular-shaped human face with holes representing the eyes and mouth. The chin area is pointed, probably symbolizing a beard. On each side, near the ear, holes were drilled that allowed the mask to be fastened over the face. Some scholars think these masks may have represented divinities, but others believe that these were humanity's first funerary portraits.

Importantly, death masks weren't just for Egypt's rulers and elites. Archaeological remains and representations found on ritual and votive objects show that masks were part of Egyptian culture for millennia. Over time they became an essential grave good for people of all social classes. The materials and the quality of work varied, and styles changed through the years, but the masks' function remained essentially the same: To provide a portrait of the deceased that would serve as their passport in the afterlife.

### Facial-Recognition Hardware

The masks' purpose lies in the culture's conception of death as a transit to the afterlife and the belief that the soul and the body would be reunited beyond the grave. To make this trip, the body

### WHERE IT ALL BEGAN

Found in 1999, this curious ceramic mask is one of two from a tomb in Hierakonpolis, a settlement that predates Egypt's political unification. Curved to fit over the head, it is likely the oldest mortuary mask discovered in Egypt. Egyptian Museum, Cairo

KENNETH GARRETT





# FACE-TIME CONTINUUM

## Old Kingdom ca 2575-2150 B.C.

Starting around the 4th dynasty, individualized death masks in Egypt are shaped out of plaster.

## Middle Kingdom ca 1975-1640 B.C.

Idealized portraits of the deceased adorn funerary masks made of wood, cartonnage, or plaster.

## New Kingdom ca 1539-1075 B.C.

Epitomized by the golden mask of Tutankhamun, funerary masks reach an artistic peak.

## Greco-Roman era 332 B.C.-A.D. 395

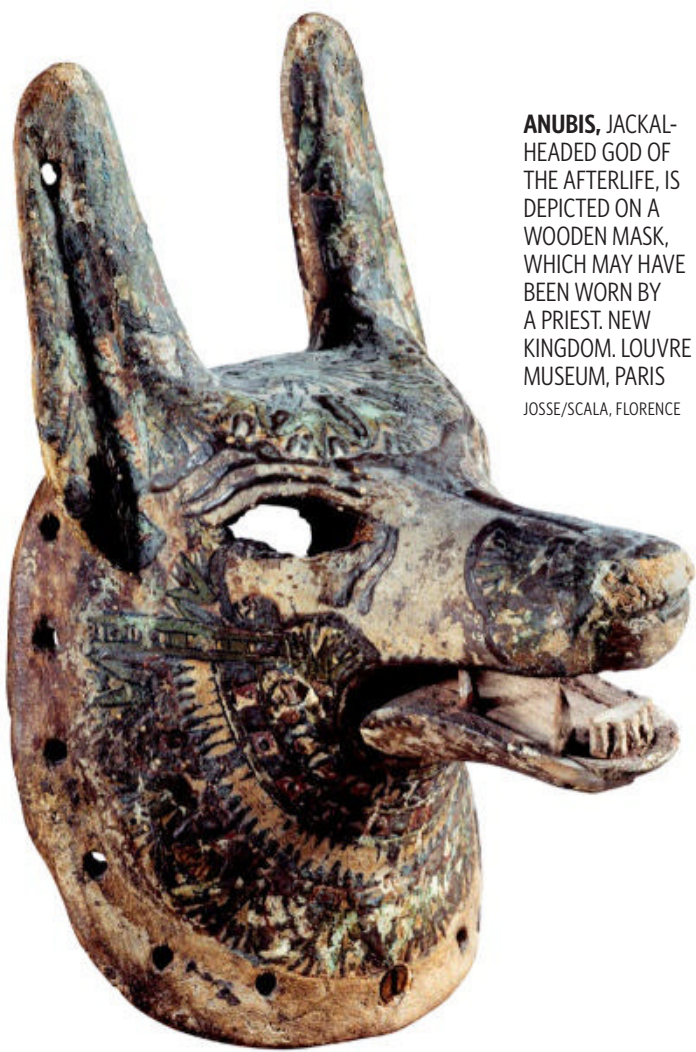
Mummy masks blend Egyptian and Hellenistic styles in this last great phase of mask-making.



**OF CANIDS AND COSMETICS**  
THIS SILTSTONE MAKEUP  
PALETTE, WHICH DATES TO  
CA 3300-3100 B.C., SHOWS A  
SCENE OF TWO SYMMETRICALLY  
CARVED LEAPING DOGS—  
PERHAPS A SYMBOL OF ORDER  
MASTERING CHAOS. ASHMOLEAN  
MUSEUM, OXFORD, ENGLAND

UIG/ALBUM





**ANUBIS**, JACKAL-HEADED GOD OF THE AFTERLIFE, IS DEPICTED ON A WOODEN MASK, WHICH MAY HAVE BEEN WORN BY A PRIEST. NEW KINGDOM. LOUVRE MUSEUM, PARIS  
JOSSE/SCALA, FLORENCE

had to be kept intact—a state that was achieved by mummifying corpses. The Egyptian art of mummification began during the fruitful period known as the Old Kingdom (ca 2575–2150 B.C.), sometimes called the Age of Pyramids.

The relatively simple process of wrapping bandages around the body, adding a layer of plaster, and then molding it created a conundrum. The goal of each burial was to help the deceased reach Aaru, or the field of reeds. Similar to the earthly Egypt with rivers, canals, and fields of crops, this paradise was where the deceased could live happily, carrying on with the activities they knew in life but free from earthly concerns.

To get there, the deceased needed to be recognizable. If the entire body was completely wrapped in bandages, the judges of the afterlife—42 divine jurists who presided with Osiris, god of the underworld, in the Hall of Two Truths—might not be able to recognize the deceased.

So by the end of the Old Kingdom, the mummification process had developed a workaround: a mask with lifelike features that would both protect and identify the deceased in the afterlife. If something happened to the mummy (in the event that the grave was looted, for example), the mask would remain as identification during the journey.

The head and face therefore received particular attention during mummification. Magic spells added to the tangible protection provided







### DEATH RITUALS

First the mummified body of the deceased was placed in the tomb. Then the opening of the mouth ritual began. Enacted to consecrate and reanimate the dead, this rite was the most important part of the Egyptian burial process. In an image from the Hunefer Papyrus, named for the New Kingdom scribe who owned it, the

mummy stands upright with a mask covering its shoulders. Grouped around the mummy are a priest wearing an Anubis mask, two additional priests, and a pair of mourners.

BRITISH MUSEUM/SCALA, FLORENCE



by the bandages and mask. The back of Tutankhamun's mask, for instance, was inscribed with an incantation meant to prevent his head being stolen from the tomb:

*I have come to be your protection  
I have bound your head and your limbs for you  
I have smitten your enemies beneath you for you,  
and given you your head, eternally.*

## Material Gains

Mask-making materials began to change during the First Intermediate Period (ca 2125–1975 B.C.). Masks from this time were composed of two pieces of wood joined with pegs or cartonnage—a light, malleable, papier-mâché-like material comprising several layers of woven linen or papyrus soaked in plaster.

Masks also featured more idealized representations that would project a beautiful image of the deceased for their existence in the afterlife while expressing the desire to be reborn as a divine being. A man's mask from this era would usually be decorated with a beard, while a woman's bore a wig divided into three sections: two framing the face and falling onto the chest, the third tumbling down the back.

By the time of the Middle Kingdom (ca 1975–1640 B.C.), masks had become a standard feature of Egyptian burials. At this point their features were fairly standardized, though there were some key differences based on geography: Masks from the north were more idealized; those from the south tended to be more realistic. One consistency is that nearly all mortuary masks from this time bore large eyes and an enigmatic smile.

Major changes occurred during the New Kingdom (ca 1539–1075 B.C.) when masks produced for ordinary people, as well as royalty, reached their height of sophistication. This may have been connected to the fact that more and more people had access to the Book of the Dead.

Contrary to popular belief, the Book of the Dead—whose title came from 19th-century German Egyptologist Karl Richard Lepsius; Egyptians called it *The Chapters of Going Forth by Day*—was not a bible for ancient Egyptians. In fact, it wasn't a book at all. It was a collection of spells that helped the soul of the deceased navigate the underworld—a sort of manual for the afterlife.



### ▲ WIDE-EYED

A high official's cartonnage mask features an intense, expressive stare. Dating to circa 1990 B.C., it was found in a Saqqara tomb in 1921. Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen

NY CARLSBERG GLYPTOTEK, COPENHAGEN



## MIDDLE KINGDOM CA 1975-1640 B.C.



### ▲ REST IN PIECES

Work in the 1960s done at Mirgissa, a site in Nubia built on the western bank of the Nile by the Egyptians around 1850 B.C., revealed a cemetery, in which fragments of this stucco mask were recovered. Louvre Museum, Paris

DEA/SCALA, FLORENCE



### ◀ SENBI

Discovered at Meir in Middle Egypt, this smiling mask was made for a man named Senbi and dates to the early Middle Kingdom. It is made of cartonnage, wood, limestone, and obsidian. Cleveland Museum of Art

ALAMY/ACI

### ▲ IBET

Recovered in the 1960s, this painted cartonnage mask was also found in Mirgissa in Nubia. It belonged to a woman called Ibet, whose dark face symbolizes rebirth and the god Osiris. Louvre Museum, Paris

JOSSE/SCALA, FLORENCE





The oldest parts of it were drawn from funerary writings known as the Pyramid Texts, which date back as far as the Old Kingdom. At first the Book of the Dead was available only to royals and elites, but by the New Kingdom it had become extremely popular across Egypt. Scribes of this era fashioned custom-made Books of the Dead for individuals and families, with specific spells based on the life the person or people had lived.

At the same time, the art of funerary mask-making was flourishing. Mask materials could vary widely depending on the status of the deceased. A wide range of mask types—from wood for ordinary people to gold for royalty—were crafted during this phase. During the reign of Amenhotep II (1425–1400 B.C.), death masks were generally large—almost helmetlike—but their faces were small. Later funerary masks evolved to cover both the head and shoulders, like the mask of Tutankhamun, or that of 21st-dynasty pharaoh Psusennes I (r. 1051–1006 B.C.), which was found in the royal necropolis of Tanis.

Because Egyptians saw funerary masks as a way to highlight the divine transformation in the afterlife, color selection was crucial. Egyptians believed that the flesh of the gods was made of gold and their hair of precious lapis lazuli. Yellow paint or, if resources allowed, gold leaf would represent skin, while blue paint or lapis lazuli was used for facial hair. According to artistic convention, the color applied to the face depended on the sex of the deceased: Men's faces were represented with a reddish tone, while women's were yellowish. Sometimes quartz inlays were added to form the eyes, and lapis lazuli used for the eyebrows.

The mask almost always reflected the social standing of the deceased person. Most masks made for ordinary people during the New Kingdom were composed of polychrome wood. The masks of Tuya and Yuya, the parents of Queen Tiye and great-grandparents of Tutankhamun, were made of cartonnage covered with gold leaf, similar to the gold masks of the pharaohs. The eyebrows and outline of the eyes were rendered in blue glass paste and quartz (to look like lapis lazuli), and the eyes themselves were made of glass and quartz paste. Both Tuya and Yuya wore *usekh* necklaces—the broad, layered collars favored by gods and pharaohs—made of colored glass paste, to highlight their high social status.



#### ▲ UNBORN CHILD

One of two such masks found in Tutankhamun's tomb, this small cartonnage mask laminated with gold leaf once covered the head of a mummified fetus.

Egyptian Museum, Cairo

ARALDO DE LUCA



#### ▲ HATNEFER

Mother of Queen Hatshepsut's vizier, Hatnefer had a cartonnage funerary mask adorned with gold leaf, ebony, obsidian, and Egyptian alabaster. It was found in the necropolis of Sheikh Abd el Qurna. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

BRIDGEMAN/ACI



NEW KINGDOM  
CA 1539-1075 B.C.



▲ **TUTANKHAMUN**

Weighing nearly 23 pounds, the most famous funerary mask in the world was crafted 3,000 years ago out of gold and lapis lazuli, with inlays of semiprecious stones. Egyptian Museum, Cairo

BPK/SCALA, FLORENCE



▲ **TUYA**

The tomb of Tuya and Yuya, great-grandparents of Tutankhamun, was found intact in the Valley of the Kings in 1905 by British Egyptologist James Quibell. In Tuya's gold laminate cartonnage mask, the eyes are made of glass paste and quartz. Egyptian Museum, Cairo

ARALDO DE LUCA



► **MYSTERY MAN**

An unidentified Egyptian man's enigmatic smile illuminates a mask, which dates to the New Kingdom. Made of linen and plaster, it is adorned with a lotus blossom, associated with creation. Royal Museums of Fine Arts, Brussels

BRIDGEMAN/ACI



After the New Kingdom, Egypt lost its Nubian provinces and other key sources of revenue. As a slow decline began during the Third Intermediate Period and the Late Period, the widespread use of mortuary masks diminished and became, as it had originally been, mostly the province of elite burials. Those of means wore funerary masks featuring gilt flesh tones and a blue wig, both of which are associated with the glittering flesh and the lapis lazuli hair of Re, the sun god.

Funerary mask-making resumed in Greco-Roman times. Styles were much more naturalistic, eschewing the highly uniform designs of the past. Decoration was based on pharaonic Egyptian motifs, while hairstyle, clothing, and jewelry were Hellenistic. In most cases the plaster masks of the Greco-Roman era were only of the head, with special attention placed on the hairstyle, which might be adorned with gold leaf and other ornaments of glass paste and semi-precious stones.

The last ancient Egyptian masks were the so-called Faiyum portraits. These haunting, semi-naturalistic pictures were painted on a wood plaque and mounted into the bands of linen used to wrap the bodies. Found across Egypt but most commonly in the Al Fayyum, a fertile region 150 miles south of Alexandria, these exquisite portraits date to 30 B.C.-A.D. 641, when imperial Rome ruled Egypt. They exist in a classificational no-man's land: Egyptian scholars consider them Greco-Roman; Greco-Roman historians call them Egyptian.

By the late fourth century the world had changed. As Christianity became the official religion of Egypt, mummification and the fascinating masks that went with it came to an end. Thankfully, archaeology and museums have granted them eternal life. Death has many faces, and ancient Egyptians weren't the first, or the last, people to use mortuary masks. Before Egypt's rise, ancient Mesopotamians placed coverings on the faces of their dead. Masks were worn in death by Inca royalty, and by dead kings in Cambodia and Siam (now Thailand). But ancient Egypt is where the earthly and the divine came face to face for everyone—provided the deceased were dressed for the occasion. ■

A SPECIALIST IN THE LATER EGYPTIAN DYNASTIES, NÚRIA CASTELLANO IS AN EGYPTOLOGIST AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MURCIA SPAIN.



#### ◀ GOLDEN CROWN

Discovered in the Upper Necropolis at Oxyrhynchus (a city in central Egypt), this mask is made of cartonnage covered with gold leaf and has inlays of glass paste in the crown. University of Barcelona, Spain

MISIÓN ARQUEOLÓGICA DE OXIRRINCO

#### ▼ LIVING COLOR

Vivid scenes adorn this gilded and painted cartonnage mask from Roman Egypt, which dates to the first century A.D. Anubis appears on both sides of the neck. Egyptian Museum, Cairo

DEA/SCALA, FLORENCE





## GRECO-ROMAN PERIOD 332 B.C.-A.D. 395



### ◀ BLENDED ▶

The face on this second-century A.D. painted cartonnage mask is rendered in the Greco-Roman style, while the base is decorated with Egyptian deities. Louvre Museum, Paris  
GEORGES PONCET/RMN-GRAND PALAIS



### ▶ PORTRAIT OF WEALTH

Made of painted cartonnage, plaster, and plant fibers in ca A.D. 60-70, this woman's mask was found in Meir, Egypt. Jewelry conveys her prestige. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York  
BRIDGEMAN/ACI

### ▶ NEW LOOKS

This life-size mask of painted plaster from Middle Egypt dates to between A.D. 150 and 200. More realistic than masks of earlier eras, it shows that Egyptian artists were open to innovation. Brooklyn Museum, New York  
BRIDGEMAN/ACI



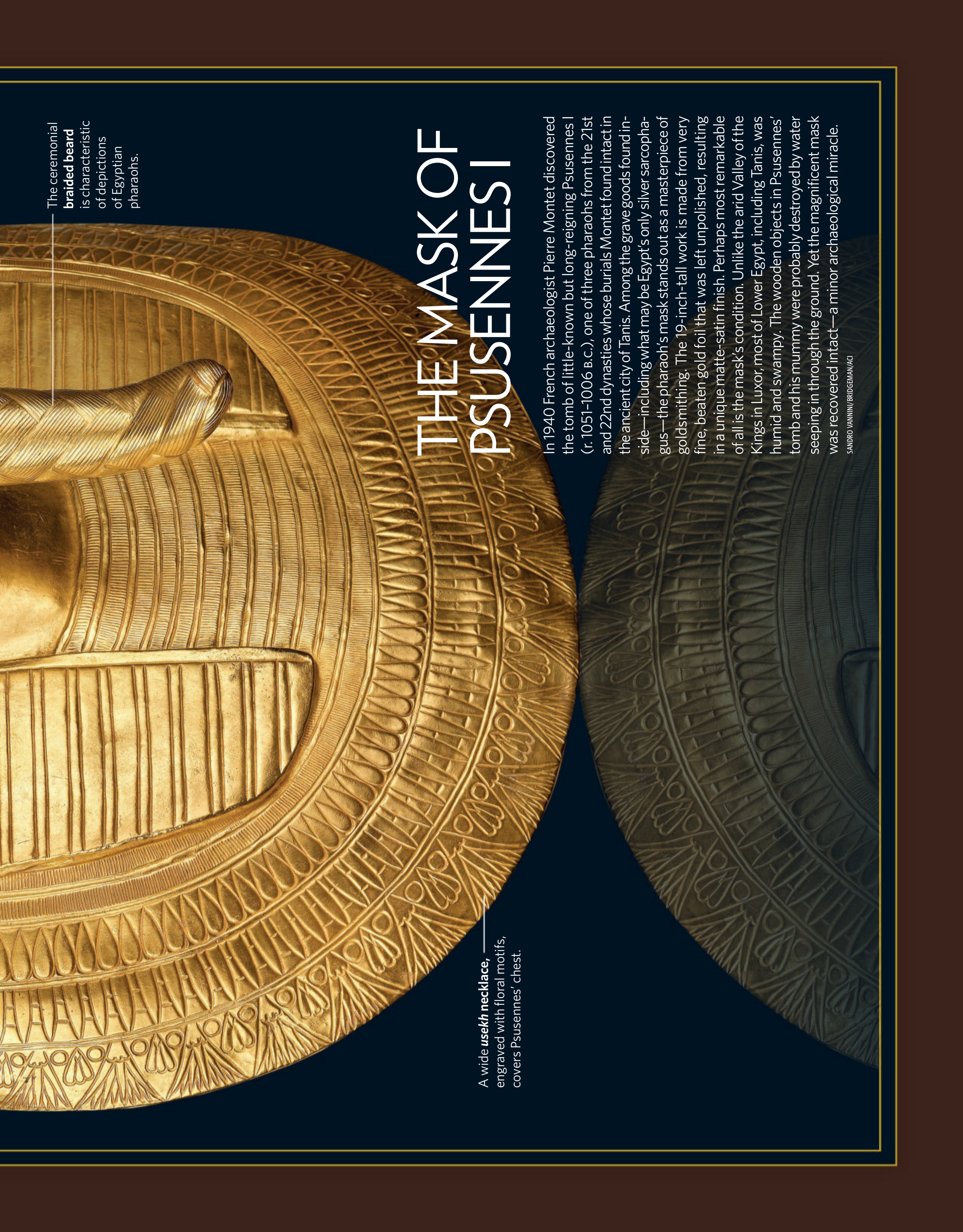


The **uraeus**, or golden **asp**, encircling the pharaoh's forehead is a symbol of Egyptian royalty.

The **royal nemes**, a ceremonial head cloth, covers the monarch's head.

The eyebrows and eyes are made with **glass paste** and **lapis lazuli**.





The ceremonial **braided beard** is characteristic of depictions of Egyptian pharaohs.

# THE MASK OF PSUSENNES I

A wide **usekh necklace**, engraved with floral motifs, covers Psusennes' chest.

In 1940 French archaeologist Pierre Montet discovered the tomb of little-known but long-reigning Psusennes I (r. 1051–1006 B.C.), one of three pharaohs from the 21st and 22nd dynasties whose burials Montet found intact in the ancient city of Tanis. Among the grave goods found inside—including what may be Egypt's only silver sarcophagus—the pharaoh's mask stands out as a masterpiece of goldsmithing. The 19-inch-tall work is made from very fine, beaten gold foil that was left unpolished, resulting in a unique matte-satin finish. Perhaps most remarkable of all is the mask's condition. Unlike the arid Valley of the Kings in Luxor, most of Lower Egypt, including Tanis, was humid and swampy. The wooden objects in Psusennes' tomb and his mummy were probably destroyed by water seeping in through the ground. Yet the magnificent mask was recovered intact—a minor archaeological miracle.

SANDRO VANNINI/BRIDGEMAN/ACI



# QUEENS

## OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

---

From the beauty of Bathsheba, to the ambition of Jezebel, to the heroism of Esther, royal women took center stage in some of the most dramatic scenes in the Old Testament.

---

GUADALUPE SEIJAS



**Above:** Fragment of Tel Dan stela that references the House of David, ninth-century B.C. Israel Museum, Jerusalem

**Opposite:** Queen Esther. 19th-century painting by Jean-François Portaels. Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia

FRAGMENT AND PICTURE: BRIDGEMAN/ACI









## BATHING BEAUTY

Bathsheba in her bath has inspired numerous works of art, including an 18th-century painting (above) by Sebastiano Ricci. State Museums, Berlin

BPK/SCALA, FLORENCE

**B**eginning with Eve, Hebrew scriptures and the books of the Old Testament provide key insights into ancient attitudes toward the role of women. Wives, mothers, sisters, daughters, and leaders—Sarah, Hagar, Rachel, Leah, and Deborah—are important figures in the journey of the Hebrew tribes that culminates in their people's settlement in Canaan (modern-day Israel and the Palestinian territories). The women who come after them—when their people unite, divide, and are exiled—have high-profile roles in stories about their struggles as a people. As queens and leaders, these female figures take on larger symbolic meanings, whether as role models, dire warnings, or bastions of hope.

## Queen of Israel

Bathsheba, wife to one king and mother of another, is queen during a golden age, the kingdom of David. After Moses leads the descendants of Abraham out of captivity in Egypt, he makes a covenant with God and agrees to follow his commandments; in return the Hebrews will be given the land of Canaan. After facing a barrage of threats, they settle there and eventually unite under a king named Saul, whom tradition places around 1020 B.C. Under him, Israel becomes powerful, creating a conundrum: With kingship comes not only power but also corruption.

David becomes king after Saul. He is an inspirational leader but is also easily tempted by lust and vanity. Bathsheba is a noble's daughter,



### CA 1000 B.C.

Bathsheba weds David, who rules over a united Israel. Their son Solomon will become the next king.

### CA 930 B.C.

After Solomon's death, rivalries split the united kingdom into two realms: Israel in the north, Judah in the south.

### CA 586 B.C.

Nebuchadnezzar II levels Jerusalem, Judah's capital. The kingdom's elites are forced into exile in Babylon.

### CA 538 B.C.

Persian conqueror of Babylonia, Cyrus the Great allows the exiled Jews to return to Judah from Babylon.

**QUEEN BATHSHEBA.** STATUE ON THE WEST FACADE OF THE CATHEDRAL OF NOTRE-DAME, PARIS. 19TH-CENTURY REPLACEMENT OF THE DAMAGED ORIGINAL  
AZOOR PHOTO/ALAMY



## LAYERS OF HISTORY

King Solomon is credited with building Jerusalem's First Temple, which was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 B.C. Rebuilt several decades later, the Second Temple was expanded by Herod the Great and partially destroyed by the Romans, leaving only the Western Wall (below).

JANE SWEENEY/AWL IMAGES







## FEMALE GAZE

Women gazing from windows (above) is a common art motif of Phoenicia, the land from where Queen Jezebel hailed. Ivory plaque, ca 900-700 B.C. Nimrud, British Museum, London.

AKG/ALBUM

with whom King David becomes captivated after spying on her while she bathes. Despite the fact that she is married to the soldier Uriah, he seduces her and she becomes pregnant. Hoping for his death, David sends Uriah to fight on the front line, where he is killed in battle.

The Old Testament gives no insight into Bathsheba's feelings; she appears to have little say in the matter. After her husband's death, Bathsheba weds David and becomes queen. The text is quite clear on YHWH's view on David's actions.

A Phoenician princess—and not an adherent of the Hebrew faith—Jezebel becomes the wife of King Ahab of Israel.

YHWH, through the Prophet Nathan, condemns David's sinful behavior and punishes him. The pair's first child, conceived during their adulterous affair, will not survive: "Nathan said to David, '... you shall not die. Nevertheless, because by this deed you have utterly scorned the Lord, the child that is born to you shall die'" (2 Samuel 12:13-14). Divine punishment may be directed at David, but Bathsheba will suffer as well.

After they are married, David and Bathsheba have a second child, a son named Solomon. To secure his power, David takes other wives, including daughters from each of the 12 tribes of Israel and some from foreign allies. David's children with them will compete with Bathsheba's son for the throne. Adonijah, son of Haggith, is David's oldest living son and has priority in the line of succession. When David is on his deathbed, the Prophet Nathan learns that Adonijah is already proclaiming himself king. At Nathan's urging, Bathsheba approaches her ailing husband to secure succession for Solomon. She succeeds and obtains the throne of Israel for her son.

## Queens of Idolatry

King Solomon's reign was celebrated for his wisdom and for his ambitious building campaigns, including constructing the Temple in Jerusalem. No sooner had Solomon died, than the Jewish kingdom separated into two: Israel in the north; and Judah in the south, centered on Jerusalem.

King Omri, who ruled the northern kingdom of Israel in the early ninth century B.C., has been attested to by Assyrian sources. He was a powerful regional figure but did not outlaw worship of other gods. Omri allowed the worship of Baal, a Canaanite storm god, alongside the worship of YHWH.

The Old Testament Books of Kings downplay the successes of Omri's dynasty in economic and international affairs and condemn the fact that many of Israel's rulers did not prohibit Canaanite cults. Two queens from the House of Omri are perhaps best remembered for the divine punishment brought down on them. Their names are Jezebel and her daughter Athaliah.

A Phoenician princess—and not an adherent of the Hebrew faith—Jezebel becomes the wife of Omri's son and successor, King Ahab, who reigned in the northern kingdom of Israel circa



## A GRISLY FATE

A 19th-century engraving based on an illustration by Gustave Doré depicts the discovery of Jezebel's remains.

ALAMY/ACI



874 B.C. As queen, Jezebel took part in affairs of state, including acquiring land for the crown.

Ahab wants to buy a vineyard adjacent to his palace, but the owner, Naboth, refuses to sell. The vineyard is part of the family inheritance and Israelite law prohibits its sale outside the family. The king is disgruntled, Jezebel hatches a plan, telling her husband: "Do you now govern Israel? Get up, eat some food, and be cheerful; I will give you the vineyard of Naboth" (1 Kings 21:7).

Jezebel writes letters under her husband's seal and invites Naboth to a banquet, where she instructs two of her men to accuse him of blasphemy. A trial ensues, Naboth is convicted, and he is stoned to death; Ahab secures the vineyard, but the episode is used to show how the northern kingdom has lost its way. Its king allows himself to be led astray by his foreign wife.

## DEATH OF A QUEEN

**JEZEBEL'S FATE** serves as a graphic warning by fulfilling a prophecy of Elijah. Her death demonstrates victory for the true faith of Jehovah against the cult of Baal.

*When Jehu came to Jezreel, Jezebel heard of it; she painted her eyes, and adorned her head, and looked out of the window . . . He said, "Throw her down." So they threw her down; some of her blood spattered on the wall and on the horses, which trampled on her . . . [H]e said, "See to that cursed woman and bury her; for she is a king's daughter." But when they went to bury her, they found no more of her than the skull and the feet and the palms of her hands. When they came back and told him, he said, "This is the word of the Lord, which he spoke by his servant Elijah the Tishbite, 'In the territory of Jezreel the dogs shall eat the flesh of Jezebel; the corpse of Jezebel shall be like dung on the field in the territory of Jezreel, so that no one can say, This is Jezebel'" (2 Kings 9:30-37).*





## SPIRITUAL REVOLT

**WORSHIP OF BAAL** spurred a revolt against the rule of Queen Athaliah. Led by the priest Jehoiada, it aimed to put Athaliah's grandson on the throne of Judah.

*Then [Jehoiada] brought out the king's son, put the crown on him . . . they clapped their hands and shouted, "Long live the king!" When Athaliah heard the noise . . . she went into the house of the Lord . . . when she looked, there was the king standing by the pillar . . . Athaliah tore her clothes and cried, "Treason! Treason!" . . . [T]he priest said, "Let her not be killed in the house of the Lord." So they laid hands on her; she went through the horses' entrance to the king's house, and there she was put to death . . . Then all the people of the land went to the house of Baal, and tore it down; his altars and his images they broke in pieces, and they killed Mattan, the priest of Baal, before the altars (2 Kings 11:12-18).*

The Old Testament authors condemn Jezebel's religious influence most of all. She supports the cult of Baal, which sparks the wrath of the Prophet Elijah. The prophet publicly challenges the priests of Baal to bring forth rain and lightning from their god. After they fail, Elijah's appeals to YHWH successfully summon up a deluge, and the prophet orders the execution of the priests of Baal.

When Jezebel learns of Elijah's actions, she threatens his life. He flees into exile. Before he goes, Elijah delivers one last prophecy to Ahab and Jezebel: "Because you have sold yourself to do what is evil in the sight of the Lord, I will bring disaster on you" (1 Kings 21: 20-21). Ahab dies shortly after in battle. Ahab and Jezebel's son, Jehoram, succeeds to the throne of Israel but is defeated by a military commander, Jehu. After





### ATHALIAH USURPED

Queen Athaliah recoils in dismay at the coronation of her grandson Jehoash in this 1858 painting by Solomon Alexander Hart. Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, England

BRIDGEMAN/ACI

killing Jehoram, Jehu travels to the city of Jezreel to face Jezebel. The queen is trapped in a tower and then thrown from a window to her death.

Jehu's defeat of Jehoram is believed to be supported by one of biblical archaeology's greatest treasures: the Tel Dan stela. Discovered in 1993 in northern Israel, Aramaic inscriptions on the ninth-century B.C. fragments commemorate a king's victory over a "king of Israel" and a king of "the House of David." The stela is the first archaeological mention of the House of David, making it a significant find. No fragments bearing the names of the specific kings have been found, but scholars believe the defeated king of Israel is Jezebel's son, Jehoram.

Jezebel's legacy is perpetuated by her daughter Athaliah. In an attempt to build bridges between the divided northern and southern kingdoms,

Athaliah marries the king of Judah (named Jehoram like her brother) and rules as queen. Their son Ahaziah inherits the throne but is assassinated. Following her son's death, Athaliah then massacres all possible aspirants to the throne of Judah and seizes power herself. Only her grandson Jehoash escapes by being hidden away. He is raised by the priest Jehoiada, who later launches a revolt against the queen.

Athaliah is the only woman to exercise power as queen of Judah in her own right. Like her Phoenician mother, she followed the Canaanite cult of Baal, although she did not suppress worship of YHWH. Her support of the cult earned her the ire of the Hebrew priest and his followers.

Scholars believe that the priest led an insurrection against Queen Athaliah in the later part of the ninth century B.C. Jehoash was crowned in the Temple in the presence of his grandmother before she was executed on the palace grounds. After her death the people destroy the temple of Baal and kill one of his priests.

The stories of Jezebel and Athaliah serve as cautionary tales. The women's most grievous sin is not ambition but their failure to exclusively worship YHWH. Their support for the cult of Baal turns them into objects of scorn.

### A Savior Queen

During the century that followed Jezebel and Athaliah, the threat to the northern and southern kingdoms came from the outside. The kingdom of Israel was overrun by the Assyrians in the eighth century B.C. Then came Judah's turn in the early seventh century B.C. when Sennacherib besieged Jerusalem. The Second Book of Kings recounts how God sends an avenging angel to slay his army, and Jerusalem is saved.

By 600 B.C. the Assyrians had been defeated by a regional power centered on Babylon. This new power would soon turn its attention to Judah and conquer it. Jerusalem was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar II in 586 B.C., and the elite of Judah were exiled to Babylon.

Rather than destroying Hebrew identity, the Exile helped shape many central tenets of Judaism. The compilation of the Jewish national

**Athaliah was the only woman to rule Judah in her own right. Her loyalty to the cult of Baal triggered her downfall.**



### STORM GOD

The Canaanite god Baal is shown in this 15th-century B.C. stela wielding a battle mace and a spear-headed thunderbolt. The stela was found at the site of the ancient kingdom of Ugarit in Syria. Louvre Museum, Paris

FRANCK RAUX/RMN-GRAND PALAIS





THE SCROLL OF ESTHER IS READ EVERY YEAR AT THE JEWISH FESTIVAL OF PURIM. 19TH-CENTURY SCROLL, PRIVATE COLLECTION  
BRIDGEMAN/ACI



story arose from having to “sing the songs of the Lord while in a foreign land” (Psalm 137: 4). Scholars believe that the Books of Kings and other books of the Old Testament were compiled during the Exile to make sense of the trauma that had befallen them.

In 538 B.C. the Persian ruler of Babylonia, Cyrus the Great, allowed the Jews to return to Judah. Many, however, stayed in Babylon, and it is from this community that the story of Esther comes, told in the biblical book that bears her name. Esther’s beauty and wit attracts the Persian king Ahasuerus (possibly King Xerxes I, 486-465 B.C., although scholars have not conclusively associated Ahasuerus with a specific king), and she becomes his queen. She hides her Jewish heritage from her husband.

Meanwhile, Esther’s cousin Mordecai, a court official, learns of a plot against the king and thwarts it. He incites the jealousy of the vizier, Haman, who presents false charges against the Jews and convinces the king to kill all the Jews in Persia. To save his people, Mordecai persuades Esther to intercede.

Risking her life, Esther reveals that she is Jewish and asks him to save her people. Realizing that Haman has been disloyal and dishonest, the king orders him to be hanged (on the very gallows Haman had prepared for Mordecai) and then makes Mordecai his new vizier. King Ahasuerus then decrees that Jews in the empire may defend themselves from anyone trying to

carry out Haman’s orders on the 13th day of the month of Adar (the day Haman selected to kill them).

Scholars believe the Book of Esther was written perhaps as late as the second century B.C., much later than other Old Testament books. When compared to other stories, it’s difference is striking, as Esther acts independently without any direct divine intervention. She is guided by her own courage and wisdom. Esther and her courage inspires joy and is the focus of the Jewish celebration of Purim. Every year she is remembered as the resourceful queen who saved her people.

Bathsheba, Jezebel, Athaliah, and Esther are all associated with different eras of Jewish history—from a golden age during the kingdom of David to the turmoil of a kingdom split by internal tensions and facing foreign threats, to the potential dangers of being Jewish in the diaspora. The tales of these women served to remind the Jewish people of their covenant with YHWH, the dangers that came with breaking it, and the duty they had to each other in the wider world. ■

GUADALUPE SEIJAS IS AN ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR IN THE DEPARTMENT OF HEBREW AND ARAMAIC STUDIES AT THE COMPLUTENSE UNIVERSITY OF MADRID.

#### Learn more

**The Biblical World: An Illustrated Atlas**  
J.-P. Isbouts, National Geographic Books, 2007.

**Who’s Who in the Bible**  
J.-P. Isbouts, National Geographic Books, 2013.





### A QUEEN'S PLEA

A favorite subject of painters, Esther makes her case before her husband, the Persian king Ahasuerus. Triptych panel, 16th century, anonymous artist, Antwerp. National Gallery, Bologna, Italy

MAURO MAGLIANI/RMN-GRAND PALAIS



# THE QUEEN OF PURIM

**BEFORE QUEEN ESTHER** thwarts his plans, the evil vizier Haman draws lots to choose the date to kill all the Jews in Persia. The word for “lots” in Hebrew is *purim*, which is how the most light-hearted of all Jewish festivals received its name. The day Haman chose was the 13th day of the Jewish month of Adar (which falls in either February or March), and the Feast of Purim is held on the following day. The Book of Esther, referred to as the Megillah (Scroll), is read in its entirety before celebrations begin. Feasting, wine, and sweets are enjoyed, including cakes known as “Haman’s ears.” Some celebrate by donning festive costumes, giving the holiday a carnival-like atmosphere.

**ESTHER, JEWISH QUEEN OF PERSIA.** 19TH-CENTURY PAINTING BY HERMANN ANSCHÜTZ. PUSHKIN MUSEUM, MOSCOW  
HERITAGE IMAGES/GETTY









## BEASTS FROM THE BOTTOMLESS PIT

Revelation 13 describes the victory of two seven-headed monsters. One is a dragon; the other has the body of a leopard, the feet of a bear, and the jaws of a lion. Earth's inhabitants prostrate themselves before them. Silos Apocalypse, early 12th century, British Library, London

*Folio 152*







# THE END OF THE WORLD

## IN THE MIDDLE AGES

In 784, as the armies of Islam occupied the Iberian Peninsula, a Spanish monk wrote a commentary on the Book of Revelation. After his death, copies of his work were adorned with terrifying and strange images, reflecting the zeal and upheaval of the age.

MONICA WALKER VADILLO

THE IMAGES THAT APPEAR IN THIS FEATURE  
COME FROM THE FACSIMILE EDITION OF  
THE SILOS APOCALYPSE PRODUCED BY  
SPECIALIST PUBLISHER M. MOLEIRO.



**T**he word “apocalypse” conjures images of the destruction of the Earth, and the end of time itself. In the early medieval period, the year 1000 was believed to herald the end-time. As it loomed ever closer, apocalyptic visions occupied the minds of Christian Europe.

For Christians living in what is now Spain in the eighth century, the visions were intensified by the cataclysmic events sweeping through the Iberian Peninsula. Those events inspired a monk, Beatus, to write a commentary on the Book of Revelation, the last book of the New Testament that vividly describes how the end-time will unfold. Beatus’s work spread through Europe, and went on to inspire some of the most richly illustrated manuscripts of the medieval age.

Beatus, whose name means “the blessed one,” lived and worked in northern Spain in highly turbulent times. In 711, two decades before his birth, Berber armies from North Africa brought the new faith of Islam into southern Spain. These Muslim forces rapidly toppled the local Christian Visigoth leaders.

One of the few Christian-controlled territories that remained was a mountainous strip in the north, comprising the duchy of Cantabria and the new kingdom of Asturias. Beatus probably grew up in Muslim-controlled regions of Spain and fled to the Christian north.

Accounts of Beatus’s life attest to his erudition. He served as the confessor of the daughter of Alfonso I, the king of Asturias, and as abbot at the Abbey of Santo Toribio de Liébana, high in the Picos de Europa mountain range. There, he wrote his Commentary on the Apocalypse sometime between 776 and 784.



**CIRCLE OF AGONY.** A MINIATURE FROM THE 12TH-CENTURY SILOS APOCALYPSE SHOWS FOUR DEMONS SURROUNDING A WEALTHY MAN WITH THE ARCHANGEL MICHAEL ABOVE. BRITISH LIBRARY, LONDON

## A Book for the Times

Beatus’s commentary presents the biblical Book of Revelation. It was authored on the Greek island of Patmos by a man who called himself John. Tradition holds that this writer is the Apostle John, Jesus’s beloved disciple who is credited with writing the biblical Gospel of John. Modern scholars argue

that the author was most likely another John, possibly a preacher from Ephesus, who composed the work around A.D. 90.

In the Book of Revelation an angel reveals to John how the end of the world will unfold: The destruction of the Earth is followed by a final battle between the forces of heaven and hell. The book concludes with a Christ enthroned in majesty following the Last Judgment.

The Book of Revelation has always been a controversial book among Christians because of the ambiguity of its language and the complexity of its symbolism. From the fourth century on, when it was included in the canon of the Bible in the Western church, numerous church fathers and theologians used it to predict when the world would come to an end, based largely on this passage: “When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth” (Revelation 20:7-8).

At the time the Book of Revelation was written, Christians living in Rome had suffered severe persecution under Emperor Domitian, who reigned A.D. 81-96, and Emperor Nero, who ruled 13 years before. By marking the end of the age of temporal power and announcing the beginning of God’s eternal kingdom, Revelation offered a message of hope. Surrounded by Muslim armies nearly 700 years later, Beatus and his fellow Christians found the same hopeful message in the themes of Revelation.

### CA 98

The Book of Revelation is written, a series of prophetic visions on the Apocalypse.

### 4TH CENT.

Revelation is included in the biblical canon, inspiring multiple interpretations.

### 784

Amid the Muslim invasion of Iberia, a monk, Beatus, writes his commentary on Revelation.

### 1109

An illuminated commentary is completed at the monastery of Santo Domingo de Silos.

### 1840

Napoleon’s brother Joseph who had acquired the Sielos Apocalypse, sells it to the British Library.



**THE BEAST FROM THE ABYSS (REVELATION 13).** ILLUSTRATION FROM THE SILOS APOCALYPSE, 12TH CENTURY. BRITISH LIBRARY, LONDON



## AUTHORED IN THE ABBEY

Light fills the altar of the church of the Abbey of Santo Toribio de Liébana in Cantabria, northern Spain, where Beatus wrote his Commentary on the Apocalypse in 784.

PAUL QUAYLE/ALAMY







## MUSLIM SPAIN

Muslim forces first landed at Gibraltar in 711, rapidly occupying the land they called Al Andalus. By the time of Beatus's birth in around 730, much of the peninsula was under Muslim control except for a sliver of mountainous territory along the northern Atlantic coast.

NG MAPS

At the time of Beatus's birth around 730, Muslim troops were relentlessly advancing northward, pushing over the Pyrenees and deep into France. In 750, when Beatus was about 20, the Umayyad caliphate in Damascus was toppled by the Abbasid dynasty. Fleeing the new rulers, an Umayyad heir, Abd ar-Rahman, came to Spain and overthrew the existing Muslim regime in the south. He created his capital at Córdoba, later to become one of the biggest and most cultured cities in Europe. The arrival of Abd ar-Rahman consolidated the power of Muslim Spain. The Christians of Asturias and Cantabria had to dig in for the long haul.

Beatus's commentary reflects internal struggles among Spanish Christian communities during the rise of Muslim Córdoba. A highly orthodox thinker, Beatus used his work to express opposition to the teaching of Elipandus, the archbishop of Muslim-controlled Toledo. Elipandus was a supporter of "Adoptionism," the belief that in order for Jesus to have the attribute of humanity as well as divinity, it was necessary for him to have been the adopted son of God.

Controversial beliefs could be seen as grave threats to Christian unity. Beatus's work references Elipandus's dangerous beliefs alongside the Muslim invasion. He seems to equate them with the kinds of heresies that would set in motion the end of the world as described in the Book of Revelation. In his view, Beatus predicted that the catastrophic events that would bring about the end-time would fall in A.D. 800.

## Everything Was Illuminated

The Commentary on the Apocalypse consists of twelve books in which the original text of Revelation is transcribed in Latin (a section known as the *storia*) followed by an explanation (*explanatio*). Also included are selections from earlier scholarly interpretations (*interpretatio*) written by Christian thinkers such as Jerome and Augustine in the fourth and fifth centuries.

Beatus's scholarship is highly orthodox, with little personal interpretation. In his dedication to a Spanish bishop, he wrote: "What has been put into this little book is not by me; instead, you find here what is found and explained by the holy Fathers . . . you may believe this book to be the little key to all the books in the bookcase."

After his death, Beatus's commentary became popular in one monastic community after another. Between the 10th and 13th centuries lavishly illustrated versions, known as Beatus Apocalypses, were created. About 27 of these illustrated versions have survived to today.

Most copies were made in northern Spain in the Mozarabic manner: a highly colored, geometric style that borrowed from Arab and Islamic art. In the 11th century monks of the Abbey of Santo Domingo de Silos (near Burgos, northern Spain) created one of the most splendid: the Silos Apocalypse. Dominico and Munnio began the texts and some illustrations, but their work halted on April 18, 1091. It was not until 1109 that a third monk, Petrus, completed the astonishing illustrations: Human figures are depicted with bodies in profile and heads face-on. Their distinctive wide-eyed expressions, bring the strange texts of Revelation to vivid life.

The use of fine parchment, as well as gold and silver for the text and illustrations, made the Silos Apocalypse a luxury object. In the early 1800s, it was acquired by Napoleon Bonaparte's brother Joseph perhaps while he served as king of Spain (1808-1813). Joseph Bonaparte sold this edition to the British Library in 1840, where it is held to this day. ■

MEDIEVALIST **MONICA WALKER VADILLO** IS A TUTOR AT THE DEPARTMENT FOR CONTINUING EDUCATION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD, ENGLAND.

*Learn more*

**Revelations: Visions, Prophecy, and Politics in the Book of Revelation**

Elaine Pagels, Penguin Books, New York, 2013.

**Kingdoms of Faith: A New History of Islamic Spain**

Brian Catlos, Basic Books, New York, 2018.





## CLOISTER OF COMPLETION

Reliefs depict scenes related to the Passion of Christ in the cloister of the Abbey of Santo Domingo de Silos near Burgos in northern Spain. The lavish illustrations of the Silos version of Beatus's commentary were completed here in 1109.

LEIVA/FOTOTECA 9X12



# BEGINNING OF THE END

**T**he battle between the forces of heaven and hell is an important focus of the Book of Revelation. This theme resonated strongly in the Christian enclaves of northern Spain, where Beatus completed his Commentary on the Apocalypse in 784. On the following pages, details from the early 12th-century Silos Apocalypse (held today in the British Library) display the intensity and vibrance of the Mozarabic artistic style that conveys the destruction unleashed. God possesses a scroll bound by seven seals. As each seal is opened by the Lamb (representing Christ), a catastrophic event occurs, such as the arrival of the four horsemen of the Apocalypse—Conquest, War, Famine, and Death (opposite).



*Folio 83r*

## **God, enthroned, bears the seals** ▲

Revelation 5: "Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals." In this section of the Silos Apocalypse, God sits enthroned surrounded by 24 elders.

## ◀ **The Lamb receives the seals**

Revelation 5: The Lamb, symbolizing the sacrificed Christ, is worthy of opening the seven seals from God. The angels sing: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!"

## **Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse** ►

Revelation 6 recounts what is revealed when the Lamb opens the first four seals: "I looked, and there before me was a **white horse!** Its rider held a bow, and he was given a crown, and he rode out as a conqueror bent on conquest . . . Then another horse came out, a **fiery red one.** Its rider was given power to take peace from the earth and to make people kill each other. To him was given a large sword . . . And there before me was a **black horse!** Its rider was holding a pair of scales in his hand . . . When the Lamb opened the fourth seal . . . there before me was a **pale horse!** Its rider was Death, and Hades was following close behind him."



*Folio 86v*





equum alium  
equus fidebatur  
super eum abebatur  
gladium

equum rostratum  
equus fidebatur  
super eum abebatur  
gladium

equus niger  
equus fidebatur  
super eum  
abebatur  
gladium

equus pallidus  
equus fidebatur  
super eum abebatur  
gladium

equus fidebatur  
super eum  
abebatur  
gladium



# UNCOMMON VISIONS OF COMMON FEARS

**T**he everyday fears of medieval Europeans found their way into the illustrations featured in the surviving 27 illustrated Beatus Apocalypses. A vivid scene from the ninth chapter of the Book of Revelation describes how locusts emerge from the bottomless pit when an angel sounds its horn. In the Silos Apocalypse, the “fallen star” who unlocks the “shaft of the Abyss” can be seen as a human figure at the bottom of the frame. Out of the void rises vibrant orange locusts that torment those who have turned from God. Medieval Europeans feared crop-destroying swarms of pests, especially in times of war when food security was of the utmost importance. The agony of the tormented could therefore be understood by comparing everyday agricultural fears with the terrors of the Apocalypse to come.

## *Tormentors of God* ▶

Revelation 9: “The fifth angel sounded his trumpet, and I saw a star that had fallen from the sky to the earth. The star was given the key to the shaft of the Abyss. When he opened the Abyss, smoke rose from it . . . And out of the smoke locusts came down on the earth and were given power like that of scorpions of the earth. They were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any plant or tree, but only those people who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads. They were not allowed to kill them but only to torture them for five months. And the agony they suffered was like that of the sting of a scorpion when it strikes.”











Folio 143v

## Voices of God ▲

Revelation 11: "And I will appoint my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days' . . . Now when they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up from the Abyss will attack them, and overpower and kill them. Their bodies will lie in the public square of the great city . . . The inhabitants of the earth will gloat over them and will celebrate by sending each other gifts . . . But after the three and a half days the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and terror struck those who saw them. Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, 'Come up here.' And they went up to heaven in a cloud, while their enemies looked on. At that very hour there was a severe earthquake and a tenth of the city collapsed. Seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the survivors were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven."

## DIVINE

**T**he commentary likens the Antichrist to a heretic who will destroy the community of the Christian faithful. In one episode the beast rises from the pit and kills the two heavenly appointed witnesses, which scholars believe could have resonated strongly in an Iberian





Folio 144r



Folio 145v

▲ **Sounding the call**  
The angel blasts the seventh trumpet.

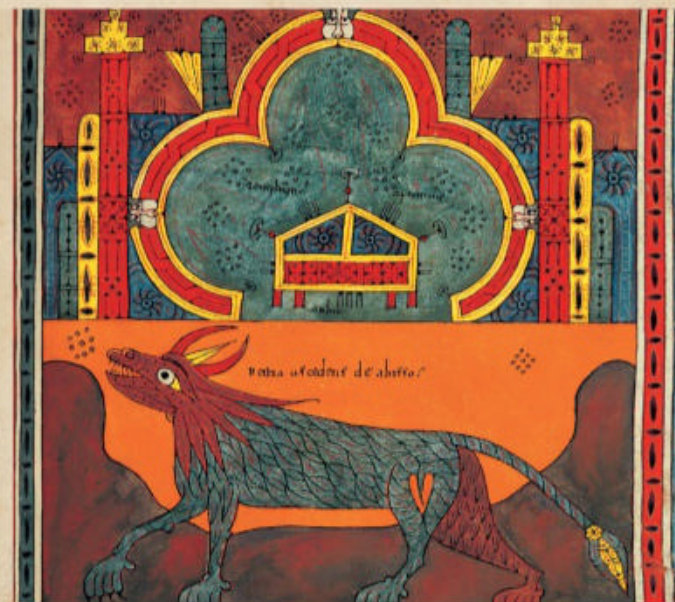
◀ **Saved and sinners**  
God takes his two witnesses up into a cloud, while sinners are destroyed in an earthquake.

▼ **The beast**  
The beast of hell, which rises from the bottomless pit

## TESTIMONY

Peninsula overwhelmed by Muslim armies. In the mid-ninth century, some 50 years after Beatus's death, scores of executions of Christians took place in the Umayyad capital of Córdoba. The Silos Apocalypse was completed in the early 12th century, making it likely that these

events colored the depictions of the righteous witnesses being killed. A Silos depiction (opposite) shows decapitation being used to strike down the witnesses. They are killed with a sword, the method described by the chroniclers of the Córdoba martyrdoms.



Folio 146r



# ANGELS AND DRAGONS

## *Battle for the Heavens*

One of the most dazzling compositions in the Silos Apocalypse recounts a great battle in heaven in which the archangel Michael battles the red dragon, as described in the verses of Revelation 12:

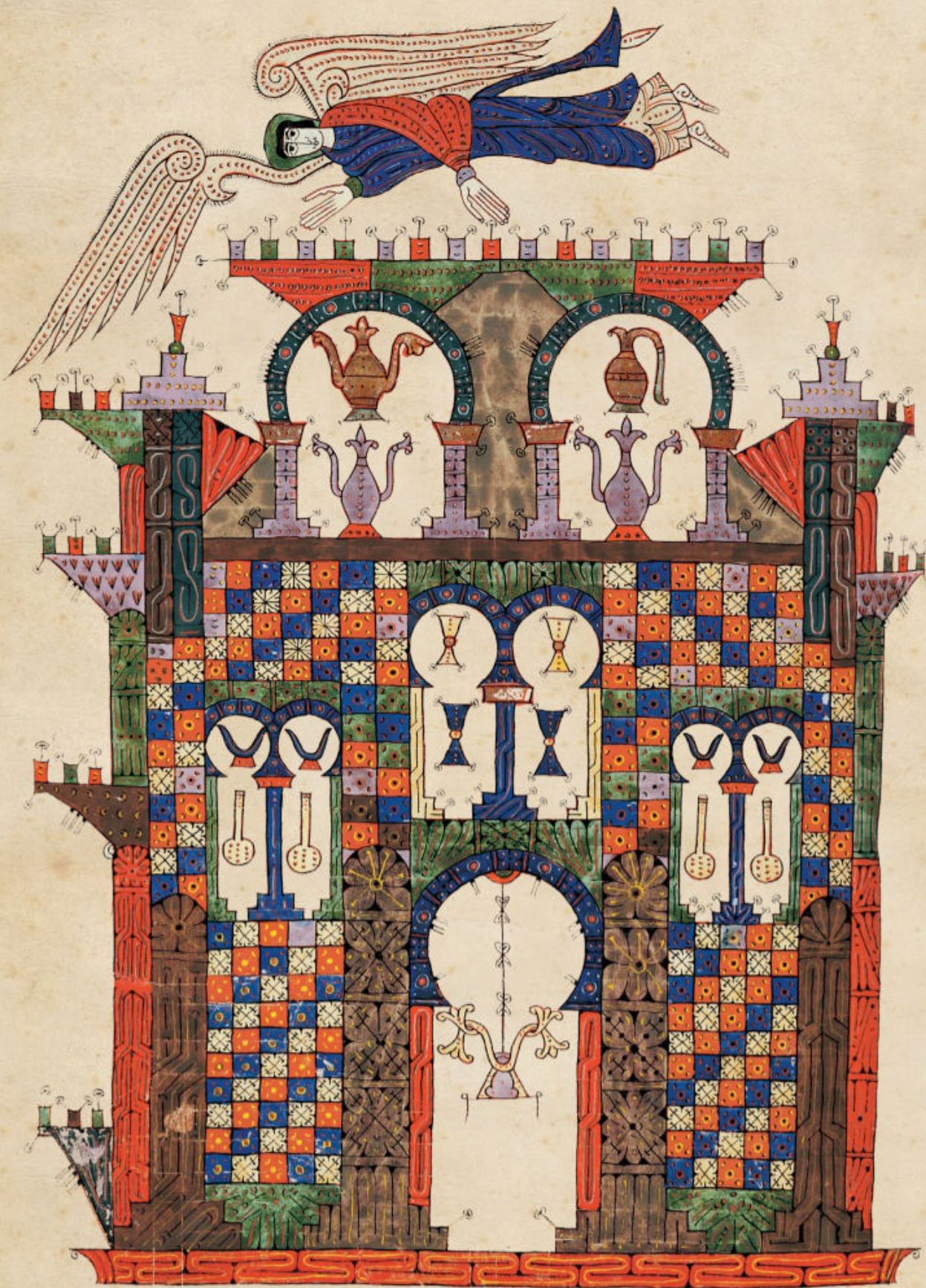
- ① "A great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head. She was pregnant and cried out in pain as she was about to give birth."
- ② "Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on its heads. Its tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth."
- ③ "[The woman] gave birth to a son, a male child, 'who will rule all the nations with an iron scepter.'" The dragon waited to devour the baby, "but her child was snatched up to God and to his throne."
- ④ "Then war broke out in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven."
- ⑤ "The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient snake called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him."











Folio 190v

EXPLET LIBER OCTAVUS

THE LIBR NONVS

DE MVLTIS MER

TRIBES TIAE

**E**rat autem unus ex septem angelis  
habentibus fialas et loquutus  
est mecum dicens: Veni horatū dū  
tibi damna cōponit meretricis  
magne sedenti super aquas mul-  
tis cum qua fornicata sunt  
reges terre et in ebria cū sunt qui  
habitantia eam sunt deus forni-  
ca cōponit eis.  
Et percutia me in horam in spm;

EXPLET ISTORIA

◀ **Babylon must fall**

An angel appears over Babylon, which the artists of the Silos Apocalypse depict with Islamic architectural elements.

## CALL OF BABYLON

**R**evelation presents Babylon as the antagonist of Christ, God, and his people. In the text, the city is personified as the “Whore of Babylon,” who has made all nations complicit in her immorality. Seduced by the wine of this woman, the inhabitants of the Earth

are led to perdition. When the Book of Revelation was written in circa A.D. 98, Babylon may have been a symbol for Rome, whose extensive persecution of Christians under Emperor Domitian had earned it the ire of Christians. By the ninth to 12th centuries, when the illustrated versions of

Beatus’s commentary were being produced, Spanish Christians associated Babylon with the power of Muslim Córdoba. The Silos Apocalypse artists, when depicting the architecture of Babylon (above), used distinctly Islamic features, including rounded arches, in their work.





Folio 183v

### ▲ *Beauty and the Beast*

Revelation 17: "One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, 'Come, I will show you the punishment of the great prostitute, who sits by many waters. With her the kings of the earth committed adultery, and the inhabitants of the earth were intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries.' Then the angel carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness. There I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names and had seven heads and ten horns. The woman was dressed in purple and scarlet, and was glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls. She held a golden cup in her hand, filled with abominable things and the filth of her adulteries. The name written on her forehead was a mystery: *Babylon the great, the mother of prostitutes, and of the abominations of the earth.*"



AN ANGEL AND ST. JOHN

Folio 182r



# APOCALYPSE NOW AND THEN

**C**hrist defeats Satan and chains him in the Abyss, where he will stay for a thousand years. For Beatus, writing his commentary in the late eighth century, the prediction that Satan would break free after a thousand years reinforced the idea that Christian Spain, beset by the forces of Islam, was approaching the Apocalypse. Beatus (who died in 798) predicted the world would end in 800, basing his calculation not on the thousand years that elapse from the time of Christ, but on the termination of six millennia since Creation. The Silos artists who illuminated his work three centuries later, had already lived through the millennium. Although apocalyptic zeal had faded by then, their depictions have lost none of the fiery urgency of Beatus's vision.



ST. JOHN  
GRIPPING  
A SPIRAL-  
TOPPED STAFF

Folio 198r



Folio 177v

## Slaying the beasts

The seven-headed sea beast described in Revelation 13 threatens an angel (above), while a scene from chapter 19 (below) shows the righteous defeating the land beast and the false prophet.



Folio 198v

## Locked Up Below ▶

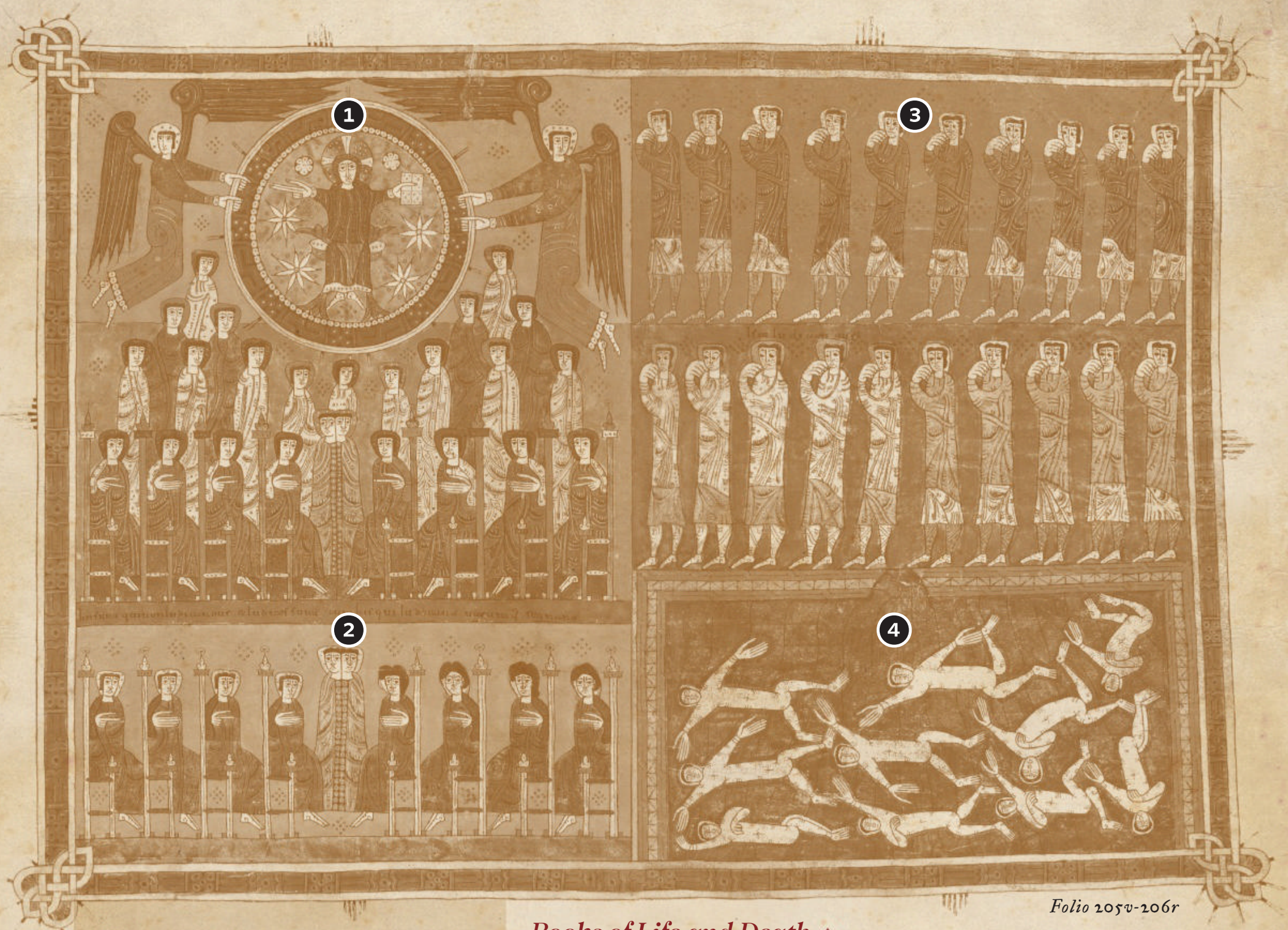
Revelation 20: "And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, that ancient snake, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations any more until the thousand years were ended . . . When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth . . . and to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore."



ubi angelus apprehendit  
draconem & ligavit eum  
in abissum. Id est  
diabolum.







Folio 205v-206r

## NEW BEGINNINGS

**F**ollowing Christ's triumph over the beast, the Last Judgment must take place during which all the dead will be resurrected and judged. The splendid illustration of the Last Judgment in the Silos Apocalypse, completed in the early 12th century, reveals how expectations about the end-time among Spanish Christians were changing. Since the year 1000 had passed decades before without incident, Christians were beginning to accept that the fiery destruction of the Earth might not happen in their lifetime. There was a shift to a reflection on their natural death, and the divine judgment that eventually awaited them as individuals.

### *Books of Life and Death* ▲

Revelation 20: "Then I saw a ① great white throne and him who was seated on it. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, ② and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what they had done. ③ Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. ④ Anyone whose name was not found in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire."



Folio 208v

Revelation 21: "Then I saw . . . ⑤ the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God . . . And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them . . . He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.'"



**World reborn ►**

The angel describes the heavenly Jerusalem to John in Revelation 22. Christ reigns in majesty and from him springs the river of life. Beside the river is the tree of life "bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations."







huiusmodi quoniam ludicantur et ludices sunt cum his qui ludicant uerumque regnare





**Last Judgment**  
A magnificent, full-color version of the Last Judgment in the Silos Apocalypse reveals a monastic vision of the world after the millennium had passed.





Timbuktu houses various collections of priceless historic documents. Above: A 15th-century treatise on prophecy in the collection of the Timbuktu-born scholar Ismael Diadié Haidara. Below: A manuscript from the collection of the archivist Abdel Kader Haidara. Opposite: A 12th-century astrology treatise from the same collection.

XAVIER ROSSI/GETTY IMAGES



RISE OF THE GOLDEN AGE

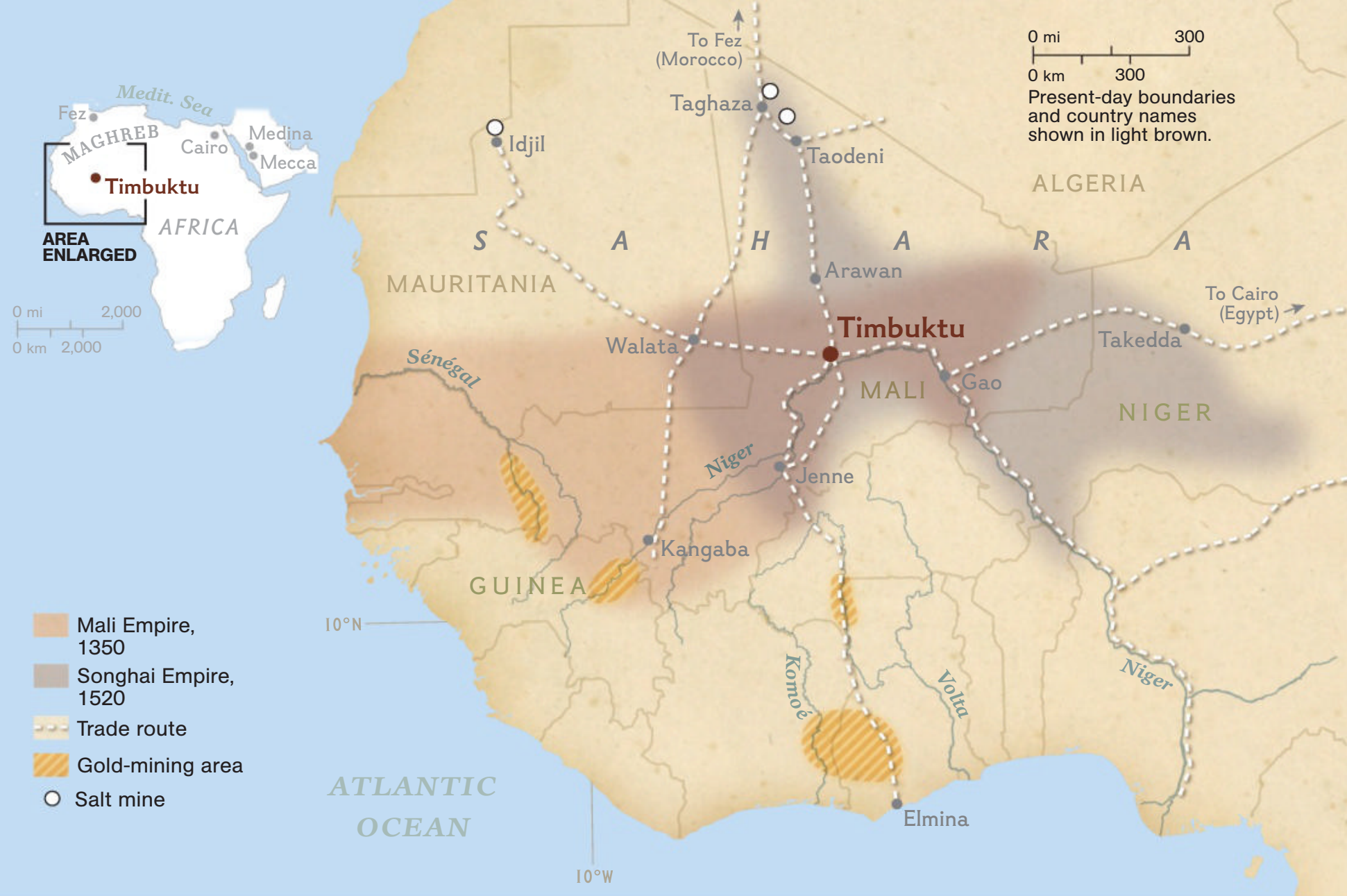
# TREASURES OF TIMBUKTU

Along the banks of the Niger and at the edge of the Sahara,  
Timbuktu grew from a nomads' camp to a sophisticated  
city of thousands, drawn by its wealth and wisdom.

EDITORS OF NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC







## TREASURE CITY

Founded by Tuareg in the 1100s, Timbuktu became a rich gold- and salt-trading hub of the Mali and then Songhai Empires. In the late 1500s it was conquered by forces from Morocco and then declined.

NG MAPS

For some, the name Timbuktu might conjure up romantic visions of golden treasures hidden away in a so-called lost city in northwest Africa. While these ideas may be entrancing, they do not capture the true wealth of Timbuktu. Located at the edge of the Sahara desert in modern Mali, the city's true wealth lies in its rich history. During its "golden age" in the 15th and 16th centuries, the city of Timbuktu boasted between 50,000 and 100,000 residents. Its bustling streets were packed with merchants and their camels, coming in from trade caravans that stretched for miles outside the city limits.

Today its population is about the same size, but the mile-long caravans are all but extinct. Sand blown in from the desert has nearly swallowed the paved road that runs through the heart of the city, reducing the asphalt to a wavy black serpent; goats now browse along the roadside in front of mud-brick buildings. It isn't the prettiest city, an opinion that foreigners who have arrived with grand visions have repeated ever since 1828, when René-Auguste Caillié became the first European to visit Timbuktu and return alive. Rather than a city of gold, Timbuktu had become a city of subtler hues: the tans and creams of parchment, mud brick, and desert sands.

The mosaic of Timbuktu that emerges from history depicts an entrepôt made immensely



## TRADE, BOOKS, AND CONQUEST

### 1100S

Tuareg nomads found Timbuktu as a seasonal trading post. It is strategically sited just north of the Niger River.

### 1300S

Mansa Musa makes Timbuktu the capital of his Mali Empire. It becomes a center of trade and culture.

**CALLIGRAPHY AND COLOR.** AN UNDATED MANUSCRIPT FROM A TIMBUKTU COLLECTION  
CPA MEDIA PTE LTD/ALAMY



## FAITH AND STUDY

Built with mud bricks by the great Mali emperor Mansa Musa, the 14th-century Djinguereber mosque is Timbuktu's oldest standing building. Long revered as a place of learning, it is one of three mosques that belong to the city's university.

FRANS LEMMENS/ALAMY



### 1400-1500S

Timbuktu experiences a golden age, attracting scholars and assembling massive libraries.

### 1500S

Conquered by Moroccan invaders in 1591, Timbuktu goes into decline. Its manuscripts are dispersed.

### 1800S

Inspired by medieval travelogues, European explorers travel to Timbuktu. In 1894 the city falls under French control.

### 1960

French colonial rule ends, and Timbuktu belongs to the newly independent Mali.





# Timbuktu's Founders

**TIMBUKTU WAS** founded in the 12th century as a seasonal camp by the Tuareg, the nomadic people who controlled the caravan routes across the Sahara. Their culture has survived much turmoil since then, much of it due to European colonialism. The Tuareg found their far-flung community split by national boundaries, from Algeria and Libya in the north to as far south as Nigeria. The Tuareg strive to retain their identity: Predominantly Muslim, they speak a variety of Berber-based languages such as Tamashek, as well as Arabic and French. Although recent droughts and urbanization have challenged their traditional lifestyle, many still practice nomadism, and Tuareg communities—the men swathed in their distinctive, vibrant blue robes—still move through the vast spaces of the Sahara.

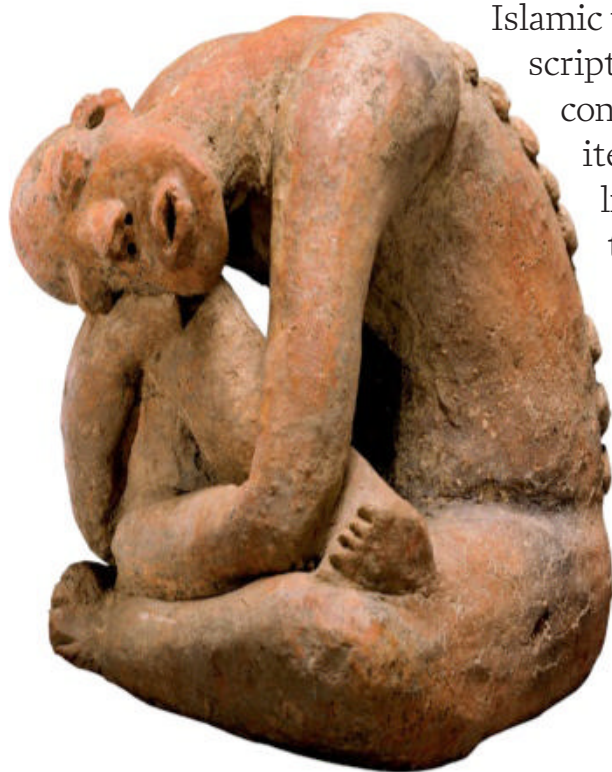
## DESERT BLUE

These traditionally dressed Tuareg men were photographed near the oasis of Tîmia in Niger, several hundred miles northeast of Timbuktu.

ROBERT HARDING/ALAMY

wealthy by its position at the intersection of two critical trade arteries—the Saharan caravan routes and the Niger River. Merchants brought cloth, spices, and salt from places as far afield as Granada, Cairo, and Mecca to trade for gold, ivory, and enslaved peoples from the African interior.

This wealth fueled Timbuktu's rise not only as a center of commerce but also as a center of knowledge. The city would erect grand mosques, attracting scholars who in turn formed academies and imported books from throughout the Islamic world. Parchment and vellum manuscripts arrived via the caravan system that connected northern Africa with the Mediterranean and Arabia. Wealthy families, who measured their importance by the books they accumulated, had the documents copied and illuminated by local scribes. The rich built extensive libraries that contained works of religion, art, mathematics, medicine, astronomy, history, geography, and culture.



**SEATED FIGURE.** 13TH-CENTURY SCULPTURE, NIGER DELTA, MALI. METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, NEW YORK  
THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, NEW YORK

## Founders and Faiths

Timbuktu's origins can be traced back to the 1100s when a clan of Tuareg, a nomadic people of northwest Africa, struck a seasonal camp near the Niger River. According to tradition, when they migrated north, they left behind the camp under the care of a woman named Bouctou, which some translate as "mother with the big belly button." When it came time to return to the camp, the Tuareg referred to it as Tin-bouctou, meaning "the well of Bouctou." The encampment grew into a city during the centuries that followed.

In the 700s and 800s, Islam began spreading across North Africa, from Egypt to the Maghreb, a coastal region that includes modern Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, and Tunisia (historically, this region is also called the Barbary Coast and its people are often referred to as Berbers). From there, Muslim traders ventured south across the Sahara desert, traveling in caravans in search of gold, ivory, and other precious goods along the Niger and Sénégal Rivers. Locals in the region began to adopt the new faith along with the wealth that trade brought to the region. These traders would reach Timbuktu and import their faith to the city.



## DOOR TO THE PAST

Several doors of Timbuktu's Sidi Yahya mosque, founded in the 15th century, reveal the ornate influence of Moroccan style in contrast to the austerity of other buildings in the city.

MICHEL RENAUDEAU/GETTY IMAGES







## FROM HERE TO TIMBUKTU

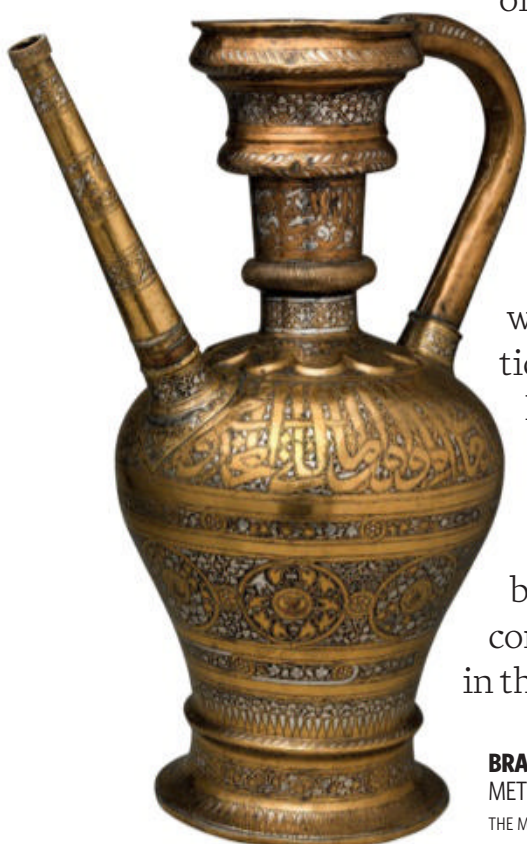
Above, a famous sign in Tamgrout, Morocco, reflects the historic reach of Mali's city of trade and learning.

TERRANCE KLASSEN/AGE FOTOSTOCK

In the early 13th century, the Malinke people lived in the small kingdom of Kangaba (located near today's border between Mali and Guinea). Around 1225, they followed an exiled prince, Sundiata, in rebellion against Sumanguru, an unpopular leader who had alienated Muslim traders. After taking power in Kangaba, Sundiata expanded his holdings over the former kingdom of Ghana and neighboring lands rich in gold and other assets, including Timbuktu. He embraced Islam and welcomed Muslim merchants to his lands.

Under Sundiata, this region grew prosperous and would become known as the Mali Empire. Religious tolerance was embraced, and traditional polytheistic faiths flourished alongside other beliefs. Islam grew popular, especially among the merchant class. When Sundiata's grand-nephew, Mansa Musa, became emperor, he made Timbuktu his capital. He pushed the boundaries of the Mali Empire, expanding control to the cities of Gao in the east, Walata in the west, and Jenne to the south.

**BRASS EWER, MAMLUK EGYPT, EARLY 1300S.**  
METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, NEW YORK  
THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, NEW YORK



In 1324 Mansa Musa left Timbuktu and embarked on a celebrated pilgrimage to Mecca that brought new attention to Mali and its wealth. His party numbered in the thousands and included as many as 500 slaves, each carrying four pounds of gold. One Arab source recorded that Mansa Musa and his attendants spent so freely in Cairo that they devalued the metal there for years to come.

Mansa Musa's journey enhanced Timbuktu's scholarly reputation and trade status. Architects traveled back with him, including a prominent one from Cairo who designed the Djinguereber mosque, a UNESCO World Heritage site today. Scholars from the Arab world flocked to Timbuktu, and the city was adorned with mosques and a university.

Perhaps the greatest achievement of Mansa Musa's journey was the knowledge he obtained. He brought back an Arabic library from Mecca and poetry from Andalusian Spain. Larger libraries were created, and fragments of the "Arabian Nights," Moorish love poetry, and Quranic commentaries from Mecca mingled with narratives of court intrigues and military adventures of mighty African kingdoms.

Nobody knows how many manuscripts were in the city during its golden age, in the 15th and



# ON THE MAP

**DURING THE 1370s** King Charles V of France commissioned a detailed map of the known world from the Mallorcan cartographer Abraham Cresques. He created what is now known as the *Catalan Atlas*, which includes a richly detailed look at the Timbuktu region and its inhabitants. The map's legends describe local Tuareg traders (represented by a figure on a camel, below left) as a people "who cover themselves such that only their eyes can be seen; they live in tents and ride in camels." The enthroned figure wearing a gold crown and carrying royal regalia (below, right) is Mansa Musa—"This king is the richest and noblest of all these lands due to the abundance of gold that is extracted from his lands."

**LEAF III OF THE CATALAN ATLAS** (DETAIL),  
ABRAHAM CRESQUES, 1370s. BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE, PARIS  
BRIDGEMAN/ACI





الذي يرسلهم الى سفلت يتذليسون سورة النمل طية  
الحسم الله الرحمن الرحيم تلك ايات  
الفران و كتابه يسير عدد و ب و شير  
للمؤمنين الذين يقيمون الصلوة ويؤتون  
الزكاة وهم بالآخرة هم خير  
الذين لا يؤمنون بالآخرة زين العظمى اعطاهم  
بهم بقمهم اوليك الذين لهم  
وهم و الا خسروا و انت تلك  
مرلة عظيم عليم اذ قال موسى لاهله  
انرا نشت نارا استا تيطم منها عبرا و اتيتم  
بشعلا فبشر لعلكم تصطلوا فلما جاءوا  
نودي ان بوركا من النار و مرخا لعلوا  
رب العالمين و هو سي اندا الله  
العظيم و انك عما كلكما  
كلا تعلا جان و لم يذبرا و لم يذبرا  
يوسى لا تخف الا لا خاك لذي  
الا من علم ثم بدل حسنا بعد  
عجوا و ايسر و اذ خلية كج جيت  
يخا من غير سوء و نسمع ايت ال  
و قومهم انهم قوما فسيفر فلما  
الواحدة استمروا  
هوا و استيفت انهم من علم و علوا  
بالفران و ان عطفة العظمى  
و لعة و ايتا و اوت و ايتا و ايتا

سورة النمل طية  
الحسم الله الرحمن الرحيم  
تلك ايات  
الفران و كتابه  
يسير عدد و ب و شير  
للمؤمنين الذين  
يقيمون الصلوة و يؤتون  
الزكاة و هم خير  
الذين لا يؤمنون  
بالآخرة زين  
العظمى اعطاهم  
بهم بقمهم اوليك  
الذين لهم  
وهم و الا خسروا  
و انت تلك  
مرلة عظيم  
عليم اذ قال  
موسى لاهله  
انرا نشت  
نارا استا  
تيطم منها  
عبرا و اتيتم  
بشعلا فبشر  
لعلكم  
تصطلوا  
فلما جاءوا  
نودي ان  
بوركا من  
النار و مرخا  
لعلوا









# Traveler's Tales of Timbuktu

**FASCINATION** with Timbuktu was fed by the accounts of a remarkable traveler, al-Hasan ibn Muhammad al-Wazzan al-Zaiyati, known to Europeans as Leo Africanus. Born in Muslim Granada in 1485, just before that city's fall to Catholic Spain, al-Zaiyati was educated in Fez, Morocco, and traveled across the Sahara. Later captured by Christian pirates, his extraordinary knowledge of Africa led to his entering the service of Pope Leo X as a slave. On being freed, he converted to Christianity and completed his book, *A Geographical History of Africa*. Its descriptions of Timbuktu—the magnificence of its court, the abundance of its books, and its use of gold nuggets as currency—would serve for centuries as Europeans' principal source of knowledge on the African city.

## ANCIENT WISDOM

The courtyard of the Al Qarawiyyin university in Fez, Morocco (above), founded in the ninth century, is the alma mater of 16th-century scholar Leo Africanus.

UGURHAN/GETTY IMAGES

16th centuries, but they almost certainly numbered in the hundreds of thousands. During this golden age the city belonged to the Songhai Empire and attracted scholars from as far away as Cairo and Córdoba. Books continued to be the most treasured of objects, and myriad scribes worked throughout the city copying and writing works. Sacred Islamic texts and treatises were among the more popular, but manuscripts included a broad range of topics—from science to math, medicine, philosophy, and astronomy—and authors, including classic texts by Ptolemy, Aristotle, Plato, and Avicenna.

Timbuktu's downfall came when a Moroccan sultan invaded the city in 1591 to take control of the gold trade. His soldiers looted the libraries and rounded up the most accomplished scholars, sending them back to the Moroccan sultan. The collections of Timbuktu libraries were dispersed. Families

who owned private libraries hid their books: Some were sealed inside the mud-brick walls of homes; others were buried in the desert; but countless were most likely lost or destroyed in transit.

European fascination with the city grew over time, enhanced by the 16th-century writings of Leo Africanus who visited Timbuktu and recorded his impressions in *A Geographical History of Africa*. The city's reputation for mystery was also enhanced by the relative difficulty of reaching it. In 1828 French explorer René-Auguste Caillié became the first European to visit the city and return; he published his accounts in *Travels Through Central Africa to Timbuctoo, and Across the Great Desert, to Morocco*.

## Protecting and Preserving

By the late 19th century, Timbuktu's territory had fallen under the colonial rule of France. Soon after it gained its independence in 1960, the new country of Mali began to seek out and preserve the long-lost manuscripts of Timbuktu. The Ahmed Baba Institute was founded as part of this effort to save the centuries-old manuscripts. It was named for Timbuktu's most



**RENÉ-AUGUSTE CAILLIÉ**, 19TH-CENTURY PORTRAIT BY LOUISE AMÉLIE LEGRAND DE SAINT-AUBIN

THE PICTURE ART COLLECTION/ALAMY





## URBAN IMPRESSIONS

French explorer René Caillié sketched the cityscape of Timbuktu when he visited the city in 1828. The grand mosques, built in the time of Mansa Musa centuries earlier, still stand.

BRIDGEMAN/ACI



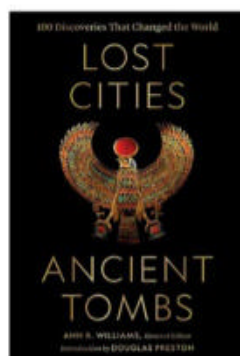


## SCREEN TIME

A researcher at Timbuktu's Ahmed Baba Institute of Higher Learning and Islamic Research digitizes and transcribes one of the collection's manuscripts.

HORST FRIEDRICH/ALAMY

*\*Portions of this article appear in Lost Cities, Ancient Tombs, edited by A. R. Williams. Copyright © 2021 by National Geographic Partners. Reprinted by permission of National Geographic Partners.*



famous scholar, Ahmed Baba al Massufi, who was held in exile in Marrakesh, Morocco, after the 16th-century takeover.

Beginning in 1973, the institute's staff fanned out across the city, traveling by dugout canoe and camel caravan to different villages. They reached out to other countries in West Africa in their quest to recover manuscripts that had been relocated and hidden away centuries ago. Today the institute has become a repository for Timbuktu's rare books and manuscripts, the oldest of which date back to the city's founding. In addition, Timbuktu is home to more than 60 private libraries, some whose collections contain as many as several thousand manuscripts and others with only a precious handful.

In 2012 a new peril emerged as jihadists—armed with weapons seized in Libya after the fall of Muammar Qaddafi—overran northern Mali. Overnight, Timbuktu was plunged into a nightmare, and residents feared for their lives. They knew the city's manuscripts were in danger as well as the cultural heritage sites in the city. The police, the army, and all government officials fled, along with thousands of ordinary citizens. Looters filled the streets. Threatened

with destruction as a brutal sharia regime was established, many of the city's priceless manuscripts were spirited out of the city to safety.

During nine traumatic months, the group managed to rescue an estimated 350,000 manuscripts from 45 different libraries in and around Timbuktu; they hid them in Bamako, Mali's capital. Other volumes were secreted away in the city itself. The jihadists were defeated in 2013. When fleeing Timbuktu, they set fire to the Ahmed Baba Institute; when assessing the damage, researchers reported that many of the ancient manuscripts escaped destruction. Today work continues to preserve these fragile treasures for the future even in the face of political uncertainty. The search for ancient texts is tantalizingly unfinished, as the full extent of Timbuktu's treasures remains to be seen. ■

*Learn more*

***African Dominion: A New History of Empire in Early and Medieval West Africa***  
Michael Gomez, Princeton University Press, 2018.

***The Bad-Ass Librarians of Timbuktu***  
Joshua Hammer, Simon & Schuster, 2016.

***Lost Cities, Ancient Tombs,\****  
A. R. Williams (editor), National Geographic Partners, 2021.





## DELICATE TASK

A technician carries out restoration of a fragile manuscript in Timbuktu's Mamma Haidara Library. The library is named for the father of Timbuktu book collector and scholar Abdel Kader Haidara.

ENSBA/RMN-GRAND PALAIS



## *THE REAL DRACULA?*

# VLAD THE IMPALER

---

Vlad III, prince of Walachia in the 15th century, was famous for his staunch resistance against the Ottomans—and infamous for grisly punishments inflicted on his enemies. Four centuries later, his name would be associated with the Count Dracula of Bram Stoker's novel, but his real legacy is even more complicated.

---

JUAN JOSÉ SÁNCHEZ ARRESEIGOR

**D**racula, prince of darkness, lord of the undead! This mythical character leaped onto the page from the fevered imagination of Irish writer Bram Stoker in 1897. But the historical figure who shares a name with the literary icon was no less fearsome. Vlad III Draculea was the *voivode* (a prince-like military leader) of Walachia—a principality that joined with Moldavia in 1859 to form Romania—on and off between 1448 and 1476. Also known as Vlad III, Vlad Dracula (son of the Dragon), and—most famously—Vlad the Impaler (Vlad Tepes in Romanian), he was a brutal, sadistic leader famous for torturing his foes. By some estimates he is responsible for the deaths of more than 80,000 people in his lifetime—a large percentage of them by impalement.



A detailed portrait of Vlad III, Voivode of Wallachia. He is depicted from the chest up, wearing a dark, curly wig. His crown is ornate, featuring a red velvet cap, a band of pearls, and a large gold star with a red gemstone. He has a thick, dark mustache and is looking slightly to the left. He wears a green tunic with a red collar and a red sash with gold buttons. The background is dark and textured.

## THE VOIVODE OF WALACHIA

This well-known portrait of Vlad III—wearing a princely cap adorned with pearls and precious stones—is a copy of one painted during his lifetime (1431-1476) now displayed in Ambras Castle in Innsbruck, Austria.

ERICH LESSING/ALBUM





## DRACULA'S BIRTHPLACE

Vlad III was likely born in Sighisoara, a small medieval city founded by Saxon settlers in the Transylvania region of present-day Romania (above). The city center is a UNESCO World Heritage site.

DOUG PEARSON/GETTY IMAGES

Vlad III's cruelty was real, but his reputation as a villain spread through 15th-century Europe thanks to the printing press, whose rise coincided with his reign. Propagandist pamphlets written by his enemies became best sellers. Centuries later, the sinister reputation of Vlad the Impaler took on new life when Stoker came across the name Dracula in an old history book, learned that it could also mean "devil" in Walachia, and gave the name to his fictional vampire. Yet today Vlad III is something of a national hero in Romania, where he is remembered for defending his people from foreign invasion, whether Turkish soldiers or German merchants.

## Family History

Vlad III, the second of four brothers, was likely born in 1431 in Transylvania, a craggy, verdant part of present-day Romania (it officially became part of that country in 1947). His mother was Princess Cneajna of Moldavia. His father, Vlad II, was an illegitimate son of a Walachian noble who spent his youth at the court of Sigismund of Luxembourg, king of Hungary and future Holy Roman emperor.

These were turbulent, bloody times as the territories of Transylvania, Moldavia, and Walachia were caught in a geopolitical and ideological pinch between the Christian Kingdom of Hungary and

## A LIFE OF STRIFE

1431

Vlad III is born in Sighisoara, Transylvania, the son of Vlad II, voivode of Walachia, and a Moldavian princess.



1447

After being held hostage by the Ottomans, Vlad III is released and seeks to reclaim his father's seat. He accedes to the Walachian throne the next year but is quickly deposed by the Hungarians.

**SADDLE BEARING** THE SYMBOL OF THE ORDER OF THE DRAGON, 1440. ROYAL ARMOURIES MUSEUM, LEEDS, ENGLAND  
BRIDGEMAN/ACI





the Muslim lands of the Ottoman Empire. As Ottoman Turks marched westward into Europe, Christian crusaders met them in pitched battle, then pushed eastward themselves toward the Holy Land. Walachia's leaders faced pressure from both sides to join their forces.

The same year that Vlad III was born, his father was admitted to the Order of the Dragon. Like other chivalric orders, this Christian military society, founded in 1408 by Sigismund, was modeled broadly on the medieval crusaders; its members were 24 high-ranking knights pledged to fight heresy and stop Ottoman expansion. Upon joining the order, Vlad II was granted the

surname Dracul (Dragon). His son Vlad III was known as Vlad Draculea, or Dracula, "son of the Dragon." In 1436 Sigismund made Vlad II voivode of Walachia, but Vlad II did not stay loyal. He soon switched sides and allied himself with Ottoman leader Sultan Murad II. To guarantee loyalty, Murad required Vlad II to hand over two of his sons, Vlad III and Radu the Fair.

For several years, Vlad III and his brother Radu were kept as hostages at the Ottoman court. The boys were tutored in science, philosophy, and the arts, and taught how to fight and ride a horse. Although they were generally treated well by the sultan and his son Mehmed (the future

### VLAD'S JAILER

Also known as Matthias Corvinus, Matthias I (below, in a ca 1485 marble relief) held Vlad III captive for 12 years on the false grounds that he had collaborated with the Ottoman Turks to attack Hungary. Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest

BPK/SCALA, FLORENCE



1456

Backed by the Hungarians, Vlad III returns to Walachia and takes power, becoming voivode after killing Vladislav II, an old ally of the Hungarians who had switched to the side of the Ottomans.

1462

Ottoman forces invade Walachia, and Vlad III seeks the support of the Hungarian king, Matthias I. Instead, Vlad is imprisoned on trumped-up charges of treason and held captive for the next 12 years.

1476

Vlad III attempts to regain power in Walachia after being released, but his short-lived comeback ends when he dies in battle. His severed head is sent to his enemies in Constantinople.





## THE CARPATHIAN MOUNTAINS

# GATEWAY TO EUROPE

The Carpathian region, where Vlad III lived, was politically and economically vital during his lifetime. Transylvania provided minerals that were exported to Nuremberg some 850 miles away, where they were used to produce armaments. Arms and cloth were then traded back in the other direction. The cities that had been settled by German migrants (especially Saxons) over

the previous two centuries now found themselves key players in the regional trade. Meanwhile, the small states of Walachia, Serbia, and Bosnia constituted a buffer zone between the Kingdom of Hungary and the Ottoman Turks, who by the end of the 14th century had settled along the Danube River. In this era, the Kingdom of Hungary included much of the Transylvanian Plateau, surrounded to the north, east, and south by the Carpathian Mountains.

The mountain passes to the east, leading to Moldavia, were narrow, winding, and easy to block. To the south, in Walachia, two wide, strategic passes—Turnu Rosu, leading to the city of Sibiu, and Predeal, leading to Kronstadt (called Brasov today)—formed the gateway to Hungary. In order to control access to crucial trading routes, the Kingdom of Hungary and the Ottoman Empire vied to control the voivodes of Walachia.

## DRACULA'S FORTRESS

Perched in the Fagaras range of the southern Carpathian Mountains in Romania, Poenari Castle (above) was one of Vlad III's main residences.

AGE FOTOSTOCK

conqueror of Constantinople), some accounts indicate young Vlad may have been imprisoned and even tortured.

In 1447 Vlad II was ousted as ruler of Walachia by local *boyars*, or aristocrats, and subsequently captured and killed. That same year, Vlad III's older brother, Mircea II, was blinded and buried alive. Janos Hunyadi, regent of Hungary, who had instigated Vlad II's assassination, appointed Vladislav II, another Walachian nobleman, to be the new voivode. Historians cannot say for sure if these events motivated Vlad III's thirst for revenge, but one thing is clear: Soon after he was released from Ottoman captivity, around 1447, Vlad III began his fight for power.

In 1448, with Ottoman help, Vlad III, then 16 years old, expelled Vladislav II from Walachia and ascended the throne. He lasted only two months as voivode before the Hungarians reinstated Vladislav. Vlad III went into exile; little is known about his next eight years, as he moved around the Ottoman Empire and Moldavia.

Sometime during this period he seems to have switched sides in the Ottoman-Hungarian

conflict, gaining the military support of Hungary. Vladislav II changed allegiances, too, and joined the Turks—a move that set up a clash between the two claimants to the throne of Walachia. Vlad III met Vladislav on the outskirts of Targoviste on July 22, 1456, and beheaded him during hand-to-hand combat. Vlad III's rule had begun.

## Rule of Terror

Walachia had been ravaged by the ceaseless Ottoman-Hungarian conflict and the internecine strife among feuding boyars. Trade had ceased, fields lay fallow, and the land was overrun by lawlessness. Vlad III began his reign with a strict crackdown on crime, employing a zero-tolerance policy for even minor offenses, such as lying. He handpicked commoners, even foreigners, for public positions, a move to cement power by creating officials who were completely dependent on him. As voivode, he could appoint, dismiss, and even execute his new officials at will.

As for the boyars—the high-ranking figures who had killed his father and older brother—Vlad III had a retributive plan. In 1459 he invited





MAP: EOSGIS.COM/NG MAPS

200 of them to a great Easter banquet, together with their families. There, he had the women and the elderly stabbed to death and impaled; the men he forced into slave labor. Many of these workers would die of exhaustion while building Poenari Castle, one of Vlad III's favorite residences.

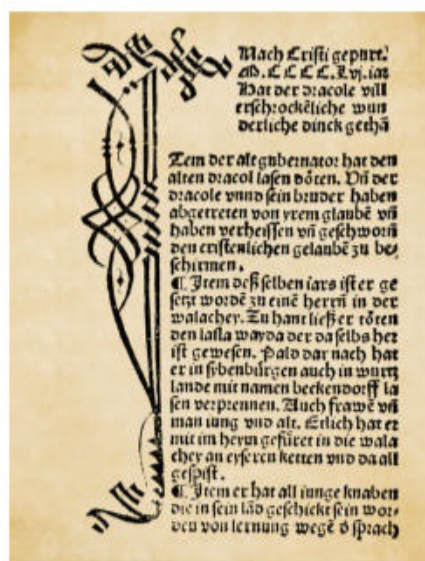
To replace the boyars, Vlad III created new elites: the *viteji*, a military division made up of farmers who had distinguished themselves on the battlefield, and the *sluji*, a kind of national guard. He also liberated Wallachia's peasants and artisans, freeing them from the tributes that they used to pay to the Ottoman Empire.

Which is not to say that Vlad III's domestic policies were benevolent. The brutal justice meted out to his enemies was sometimes applied to his own people as well. To get rid of homeless people and beggars, whom he viewed as thieves, he invited a large number to a feast, locked the doors, and burned them all alive. He exterminated Romanies or had them forcibly enlisted into the army. He imposed heavy tax burdens on the German population and blocked their trade when they refused to pay.

## DEMONIZING DRACULA

**Denunciations of Vlad III (as in the 1488 pamphlet below) tended to stem from the voivode's detractors and political enemies—either German sources or the court of Matthias I, king of Hungary.**

RUE DES ARCHIVES/ALBUM



Many of the Germans under Vlad III's aegis were Saxons. Not to be confused with the Anglo-Saxons of England, these were German migrants who had settled in Transylvania in the 12th century after the region was conquered by Hungary. They were mostly well-to-do merchants, but to Vlad III, they were allies of his enemies.

Over the next few years, Vlad III razed entire Saxon villages and impaled thousands of people. In 1459, when the Transylvanian Saxon city of Kronstadt (today Brasov) supported a rival of Vlad III's, the voivode's response was savage. After initially placing trade restrictions on Saxon goods in Wallachia, he had 30,000 people impaled—and reportedly dined among them so he could witness their suffering personally. He also had Kronstadt burned to the ground. Back in Wallachia, he impaled Saxon merchants who violated his trade laws.

Although Vlad continued to identify himself with the prestigious Order of the Dragon, signing his name Wladislaus Dragwlya ("son of the Dragon"), his enemies at this time gave him the less noble sobriquet Tepes—"the Impaler."



# THE TOMB OF DRACULA

Vlad III met his end in late 1476, during a clash with the Ottomans, but it's not exactly clear how he died. One hypothesis is that one of his men, bribed by Mehmed II, approached Vlad III from behind and beheaded him. Scholars are also divided as to where he was buried. Tradition holds that Vlad III's head was embalmed and sent to the sultan in Constantinople.

The rest of his body was buried by local monks in the church of the Snagov Monastery near Bucharest. In 1933 Romanian archaeologist Dinu V. Rosetti and Romanian historian George D. Florescu opened a tomb located 10 feet below the empty chamber believed to be Vlad III's. There, they found a coffin draped with a purple cloth embroidered with gold thread. Inside lay a male corpse dressed in velvet with a silk cloth over the face. The body quickly decomposed after exposure, but some believe it was Vlad III even though it appeared to have a head. Another theory, also unproven, is that Vlad was buried in the Comana Monastery in southern Romania, which he founded in 1461 and whose original structure was located closer to where he died.

**THE CHURCH** OF THE SNAGOV MONASTERY, NEAR BUCHAREST, ROMANIA, IS BELIEVED BY SOME TO BE THE RESTING PLACE OF VLAD III.

WALTER BIBIKOW/AGE FOTOSTOCK



Vlad III mounted several bloody attacks against Catholic communities, too, and had the support of many of his people who, as Orthodox Christians, felt discriminated against by Hungarians and Saxon Catholics in Transylvania. Cities including Sibiu, Tara Barsei, Amlas, and Fagara were targeted and suffered many losses before surrendering in 1460. These reprisals came to the attention of Pope Pius II, who produced a report in 1462 claiming that Vlad III had killed some 40,000 people.

## Drastic Measures

Vlad III's foreign policy differed from that of his father, and from many other leaders of the time. He never stopped opposing the Turks—in this he had the support of Matthias Corvinus, aka Matthias I, son of Janos Hunyadi, and king of Hungary.

Vlad III's tactics, both on and off the battlefield, against the Turks were extraordinarily brutal. In 1459 Mehmed II sent an embassy to Vlad III, claiming a tribute of 10,000 ducats and 300 young boys. When the diplomats

## DRACULA'S NEMESIS

Vlad III's archenemy Sultan Mehmed II (below) had his portrait painted in 1480 by Gentile Bellini, an Italian painter of the Venetian school. National Gallery, London

MARY EVANS/AGE FOTOSTOCK



declined to remove their turbans, citing religious custom, Vlad III saluted their devotion—by nailing their hats to their heads. In 1461 the Turks offered to meet Vlad for a peace parley; in reality they intended to ambush him. Vlad III responded with a foray into the Turkish dominions south of the Danube.

In the spring of 1462, Mehmed II assembled an army of 90,000 men and advanced on Walachia. After conducting a series of night raids and guerrilla warfare, Vlad III employed his trademark tactic, impaling more than 23,000 prisoners with their families and putting them on display along the enemy's route, outside the city of Targoviste. "There were infants affixed to their mothers on the stakes," writes the French historian Matei Cazacu, "and birds had made their nests in their entrails." The sight was so horrifying that Mehmed II, after seeing the "forest" of the dead, turned around and marched back to Constantinople.

Vlad III wrote to Matthias I explaining that he had "killed peasants, men and women, old and





FIFTEEN TWENTY, ART ARCHIVE

young... We killed 23,884 Turks, without counting those whom we burned in homes or the Turks whose heads were cut by our soldiers.” To prove the truth of his words, he produced sacks full of severed noses and ears. As Vlad III himself recognized, most of the victims were simple peasants—Serbian Christians and Bulgarians who had been subjugated by the Turks.

The Turks ultimately prevailed because the Walachian boyars had defected to Radu, Vlad III’s brother. Radu guaranteed the aristocracy that by siding with the Ottomans, they would regain the privileges that Vlad III had stripped from them. Radu attracted support from the Romanian population, who were tired of Vlad III’s bloodlust.

Vlad III’s power, money, and troops had ebbed away so much that Matthias I was able to take him prisoner in 1462. Vlad was imprisoned in Hungary for 12 years, while power changed hands several times in Walachia. Around 1475 Matthias I sent Vlad III to recover Walachia for Hungary. In November 1476 Vlad III scored an initial victory, but one month later suffered a brutal defeat. His rival, backed by Ottoman troops, ambushed,

killed, and beheaded him. By most accounts his severed head was sent to Mehmed II in Constantinople to be put on display above the city’s gates.

Despite all that, Vlad III might have been a mere footnote of the Middle Ages if it were not for a book published in 1820. Written by William Wilkinson, the British consul to Walachia, *An Account of the Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia: With Various Political Observations Relating to Them* delves into the region’s history and mentions the notorious warlord Vlad the Impaler.

Bram Stoker never visited Vlad’s homeland but was known to have come across Wilkinson’s book in 1890. Afterward, he wrote the following: “Voivode (Dracula): Dracula in Wallachian language means DEVIL. Wallachians were accustomed to give it as a surname to any person who rendered himself conspicuous either by courage, cruel actions, or cunning.” While the life of Vlad the Impaler had long since ended, the enduring legend of Dracula was just beginning. ■

## GRUESOME FEAST

Vlad III dines amid impaled victims (above) following his assault on Brasov (then known as Kronstadt). Printed in Nuremberg in 1499, this engraving, and others like it, helped spread Vlad III’s gruesome reputation across Europe.

MARY EVANS/AGE FOTOSTOCK

HISTORIAN **JUAN JOSÉ SÁNCHEZ ARRESEIGOR** HAS WRITTEN WIDELY ON THE ENCOUNTER BETWEEN THE ISLAMIC WORLD AND THE WEST.



# A MONSTROUS REPUTATION

Was Vlad Dracula the only inspiration for Bram Stoker's best-selling vampire?

**IRISH WRITER BRAM STOKER** published a novel in 1897, set in Transylvania, with a mysterious vampire as its hypnotic villain. Dracula thrilled readers who began to speculate on the source of Stoker's inspiration. Many theorized that the bloody life of Vlad the Impaler, the medieval Walachian ruler also known as Dracula, was Stoker's sole basis for the character, but Stoker drew on many sources for his most infamous creation.

**VAMPIRES WERE IN VOGUE** in the late Victorian period, and Stoker would have likely been familiar with earlier Gothic works such as Goethe's poem *The Bride of Corinth* (1797); "The Vampyre" (1819), a short story by John W. Polidori; and the novella *Carmilla* (1872), by Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu. The notable connections between *Dracula* and *Captain Vampire* (1879)—a novel written 18 years before Stoker's book, by 19-year-old Marie Nizet, a Belgian woman related to Romanian exiles—have also been pointed out.

Stoker had certainly read about vampirism in the Carpathians, and in 1890 was writing a novel called *The Un-Dead*, about a fictional character he called Count Wampyr. While on vacation that year in Whitby, England, Stoker found a rare book in the local library titled *An Account of the Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia* (1820), written by British diplomat William Wilkinson. It mentioned the voivode Dracula, explaining in a footnote that in the Walachian language, *dracul* means "devil," while in Hungarian it means "dragon."

Stoker soon transformed his Wampyr into Dracula. In the course of the novel, when the titular character sketches a historical panorama to his guest Jonathan Harker, it is surely Wilkinson's account that lies behind it. Given all these connections, it seems highly likely that Vlad III's life must have provided some material for Stoker's novel.



## UNIVERSAL ICON

Bela Lugosi (né Bela Ferenc Dezso Blasko), a Hungarian-born actor, first played Count Dracula on Broadway, before starring as the vampire in the iconic 1931 Universal film.

ALLSTAR PICTURE LIBRARY LTD/ACJ/ALAMY



**MORE RECENTLY, HOWEVER,** some scholars and historians have advanced an intriguing alternative theory for the primary source for *Dracula*: a 19th-century cholera epidemic that killed up to 1,000 people in the town of Sligo, in western Ireland. Stoker's mother, Charlotte Thornley, survived it as a 14-year-old girl and later described it for her son in grisly detail.

In 2018 Irish researchers, led by Marion McGarry of the Sligo Stoker Society, studied Thornley's writing. "Bram as an adult asked his mother to write down her memories of the epidemic for him," wrote McGarry, "and he supplemented with his own research of Sligo's epidemic."

The outbreak caused pandemonium. To stop people from fleeing Sligo and spreading the plague, officials dug trenches around the town and blocked off the roads. Corpses lay in the street. Doctors and nurses took cholera patients, stupefied by opium or laudanum, and prematurely placed them in mass graves.

Stoker was fascinated by his mother's description of cholera victims who were buried alive—a link, perhaps, to Dracula's undead state. In a rare interview about *Dracula*, the famously private Stoker acknowledged that his story was "inspired by the idea of someone being buried before they were fully dead."



**STOKER'S HORROR NOVEL** inflamed imaginations, and decades later, Bela Lugosi's iconic 1931 portrayal of Count Dracula on the silver screen made the word Dracula synonymous with vampire. The Hungarian actor's accent and dark good looks brought the Transylvanian count to life and inspired countless imitations.

Places associated with the Dracula legend are popular destinations. Some, like Poenari Castle in Romania, which was an important fortress for the voivode, are associated with Vlad III. Other locations, like Bran Castle (popularly known as Castle Dracula) in Romania have no connection with Vlad III. Some argue that Bran Castle was Stoker's inspiration for Dracula's home in the novel, but Stoker never visited Romania, so he could not have seen it in person.



▲ **BRAM STOKER**, COLORIZED PHOTOGRAVURE, 1906  
GRANGER COLLECTION/ACI

▼ **BRAN CASTLE** IN TRANSYLVANIA, NORTHWESTERN ROMANIA  
DEA/ALBUMW





# Mystery Massacre at Sandby Borg

On finding the corpses of murdered Swedish villagers, archaeologists pieced together a grim tale of societal collapse in the fifth century.

**T**he first clue that a dark story was lurking at an Iron Age site at Sandby Borg, Sweden, came in 2010. Archaeologists discovered numerous intact pits filled with jewelry and other valuable items. The mystery deepened a year later when the team from the Kalmar County Museum returned to this fortified village on the island of Öland and found human remains.

Over the next few years, 26 bodies were unearthed at Sandby Borg, a windswept site alongside a beach. The positioning of the corpses and forensic evidence all pointed to a chilling conclusion: One day in the late fifth century, an act of mass



murder occurred at Sandby Borg. Its victims, including children, were caught by surprise, murdered, and left where they fell. Working with these clues, the team is attempting to reconstruct what happened here more than 1,500 years ago.

## Hidden Treasure

The narrow island of Öland lies off Sweden's eastern coast around 250 miles

south of the capital, Stockholm. It's a land of alder forests, grassland, and beaches pummeled by the relentless wind off the Baltic Sea.

Sandby Borg is just one of dozens of Iron Age ring forts that dot Öland. Slightly larger than an acre, it was enclosed by an oval wall, whose outline is visible today. Archaeologists believe this wall once stood more than 16 feet high and protected 53 dwellings inside.

The people who lived here had much to protect, as evidenced by the treasure stashes uncovered in 2010. The pits were filled with rings, silver brooches, bells, and coins. Some of these goods, including a coin, are of Roman provenance. Öland warriors worked as imperial



mercenaries, seemingly employed by the Roman Empire. The Öland elite must have traded extensively with Rome as well. Both of these factors caused luxury goods and Roman coins to accumulate across the island.

When the treasure pits were discovered at Sandby Borg, researchers noticed a pattern: The pits were all located to the left of doorways, suggesting prearranged locations that survivors of a raid could access later. The

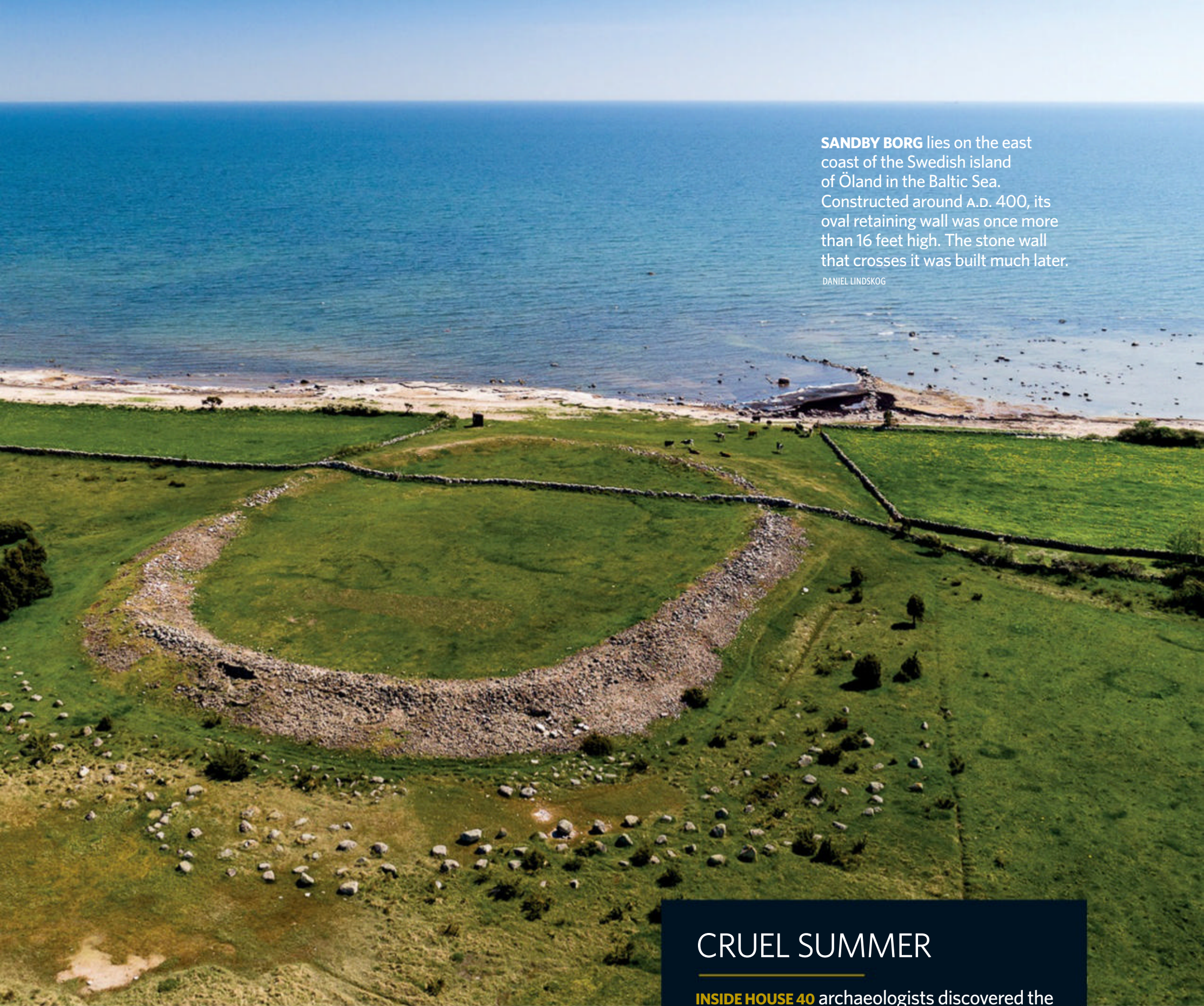


## GONE GIRLS

**SILVER BROOCHES** were found in each of Sandby Borg's treasure pits. They likely belonged to wealthy women of the community who hid them with other valuable items. The 26 sets of remains found at the site so far are all male; the fates of Sandby Borg's women and girls—whether escaped, enslaved, or murdered—remains a mystery.

**SILVER GILT BROOCH, FOUND IN HOUSE 40 AT SANDBY BORG**  
DANIEL LINDSKOG





**SANDBY BORG** lies on the east coast of the Swedish island of Öland in the Baltic Sea. Constructed around A.D. 400, its oval retaining wall was once more than 16 feet high. The stone wall that crosses it was built much later.

DANIEL LINDSKOG

## CRUEL SUMMER

**INSIDE HOUSE 40** archaeologists discovered the skeletons of lambs aged between three and six months old. They provide a useful clue to the timing of the attack. These lambs, which would have been born in early spring, died during or soon after the attack, most likely from starvation. This means the attack took place between late spring and early fall.

DANIEL LINDSKOG

fact that these pits were full suggests that something terrible had happened at Sandby Borg, and no survivors remained to claim the caches.

### Scene of the Crime

In 2011 the first human remains were found at Sandby Borg. Archaeologists uncovered two feet and later matched them with the skeleton of a late-teenaged male, whose skull had been split.

In the course of several archaeological seasons,

Sandby Borg yielded yet more grim finds. Despite only fully excavating three out of the 53 dwellings in the settlement, the remains of 26 individuals have been found in those houses and in street areas, all bearing signs of ferocious violence.

The fate of one man whose body lies just inside a dwelling has been pieced together: He likely was first wounded in the street, then stumbled into the house looking for safety. He was pursued,





**ARCHAEOLOGISTS** work at the Sandby Borg site on Öland, Sweden. As of 2018 a little under a 10th of the interior of the ring fort had been excavated.

DANIEL LINDSKOG



caught, and then felled by a blow to his head.

In the building known as house 40, nine bodies were found, including those of two very young children. Inside house 4 the decapitated body of a teenage boy was found, while in house 52 archaeologists uncovered the remains of an elderly

man that were lying over the hearth of the house. His bones suggest he was beaten violently. Charring around his pelvic area indicates he was either wounded or already dead when he fell into the fire.

As archaeologists uncovered the victims' bodies, they noticed that they had not been buried or treated with any of the typical

funeral rites. Instead, they must have lain in the exact same positions where they had been struck down more than 1,500 years ago.

### Missing Persons

The 26 victims at the site have another thing in common: They are all male. The presence of female items in the treasure pits suggests women lived at the

community, but their fate has not yet been revealed. So far there is no comprehensive hypothesis as to the women's fate. They could have been carried off by the attackers, or they could have all fled the village.

No evidence suggests the attack was a military engagement. The domestic setting, and the defensive wounds of the victims, all suggest a sudden, overwhelming attack that took place at once.

Forensic analysis proves that many of the blows, both from blunt instruments and a sharp weapon such as a sword, rained down on



## Trade with Rome and service in the Roman army had enriched the Öland island elites.

**SILVER GILT PENDANT**, FROM A SHEATH FOUND IN HOUSE 40, SANDBY BORG  
DANIEL LINDSKOG



Offer limited to the  
first 1400 orders  
from this  
ad only

*"We delight in the  
beauty of the butter-  
fly, but rarely admit  
the changes it has gone  
through to achieve  
that beauty."*

— Positivity Sparkles.com



Pendant enlarged  
to show  
luxurious color.



# TRIGGER THE BUTTERFLY EFFECT

*Happiness takes flight in shimmering abalone and gleaming sterling silver for just \$49!*

They say that something as tiny as the flap of a butterfly's wings can change the course of history. Even the faintest flutter can set off a chain reaction affecting the future. Is it possible that by choosing the perfect gift today, you can positively alter the course of tomorrow?

We say yes! After all, they don't call the present a gift for nothing! Consider the *Abalone Butterfly Effect Pendant*. This graceful beauty blends two of Mother Nature's most magical creations—shimmering abalone and the fanciful butterfly. Nothing on earth creates an iridescent glow quite like abalone. Even the subtlest of movements elicits an ever-changing rainbow of colors. This organic gem suits the transformative splendor of the butterfly perfectly.

Now, there are abalone pendants in sterling silver fetching in excess of \$1,000. But who wants that price tag in their future when our *Abalone Butterfly Effect Pendant* will bring just as much joy without the buyer's remorse. In fact, chances are good that giving her this pendant will change your life for the better, creating a romantic chain reaction beginning the minute she opens the box.

**100% Satisfaction Guaranteed.** Try the *Abalone Butterfly Effect Pendant* for 30 days. If it fails to delight, just send it back for a refund of the item price. But we have a feeling happiness is in your future.

**Limited Availability.** These are handcrafted artisan pieces, and we only have so many. There's no time like the present. Call today!

## Abalone Butterfly Effect Collection

- A. Butterfly Pendant ~~\$199†~~ ..... **\$49** Save \$150
- B. 18" sterling silver chain ..... \$59
- Butterfly Pendant & Chain ~~\$258†~~ ..... **\$59** Save \$199
- C. Butterfly Earrings ~~\$199†~~ ..... **\$59** Save \$140

**Butterfly Pendant, Chain & Earrings ~~\$457.....~~ \$99 Best Value!**

- Shimmering abalone in .925 sterling silver
- 1 1/3" drop & 1 1/4" wide Butterfly Pendant

Call now and mention the offer code to receive your special discounts.

**1-800-333-2045**

**Offer Code BYC158-01**

You must use the offer code to get our special price.

**Stauer®** 14101 Southcross Drive W., Ste 155, Dept. BYC158-01,  
Burnsville, Minnesota 55337 [www.stauer.com](http://www.stauer.com)



† Special price only for customers using the offer code versus the price on Stauer.com without your offer code.

Stauer... *Afford the Extraordinary.®*





**CLARA ALFSDOTTER**, a specialist in funerary archaeology, works on the reconstruction of two skulls from Sandby Borg.

DANIEL LINDSKOG

the victims from above and behind. A lack of evidence of trauma to forearms suggests that the victims did not have time to defend themselves, nor have any shields or weapons been found on or near the victims.

The intact treasure stashes remain a puzzle to scholars. One hypothesis is that the massacre was so brutal that everyone, women included, was either dead or too scared to return. Scholars also wondered why the murderers did not loot the wealthy village and why later treasure hunters left the site untouched for so many centuries after the destruction.

### Questions and Answers

Archaeologists believe they have at least some answers to these questions, including the events that led up to the attack at Sandby Borg.

The fortress's retaining wall was built circa A.D. 400, around the time that Rome's power was waning. As the community had grown wealthy from Roman contact, it would have felt the economic impact of the Western Roman Empire's recession.

As Rome provided fewer goods and jobs to Öland, social structures started to shift. After the Western Roman Empire fell in 476,

uncertainty spread across the old Roman world. These years, known as the Migration period, saw strife between neighboring peoples.

Clara Alfsdotter of Linnaeus University, Kalmar, Sweden, has examined all the evidence gathered at Sandby Borg. "The perpetrators do not appear to have been very interested in staying and searching for loot," Alfsdotter observes in the *European Journal of Archaeology*. She suggests their motivation was likely revenge, "based on a feeling of past injustices and a perception of the Sandby Borg group as a threat." Ultimately, the

motive behind the massacre "was probably to attain regional power and control."

The attackers certainly achieved their aim of extinguishing life at Sandby Borg. All settlement there ceased that day. No one disposed of the bodies, which may have caused Sandby Borg to develop a reputation as a cursed place that kept treasure hunters away. The untouched nature of Sandby Borg has been a boon for archaeologists, providing a perfectly preserved snapshot of a terrible moment of Iron Age violence.

—Antonio Ratti



# ROSS SIMONS

fabulous jewelry & great prices for more than 65 years

## *Our rainbow Murano glass torsade necklace from Italy*

Our vibrant torsade necklace comes to life in a twisting spectrum of Murano glass beads. Handcrafted in Italy, our colorful classic is the perfect piece to brighten your busy afternoons, fun-filled nights and every stylish occasion in between.

**\$125**  
Plus Free Shipping

**Multicolored Murano Glass Bead Torsade Necklace from Italy**

18" with 18kt yellow gold over sterling springring clasp.  $\frac{3}{4}$ " wide.

Available in 20" \$135

*Shown larger for detail.*

Ross-Simons Item #**945142**

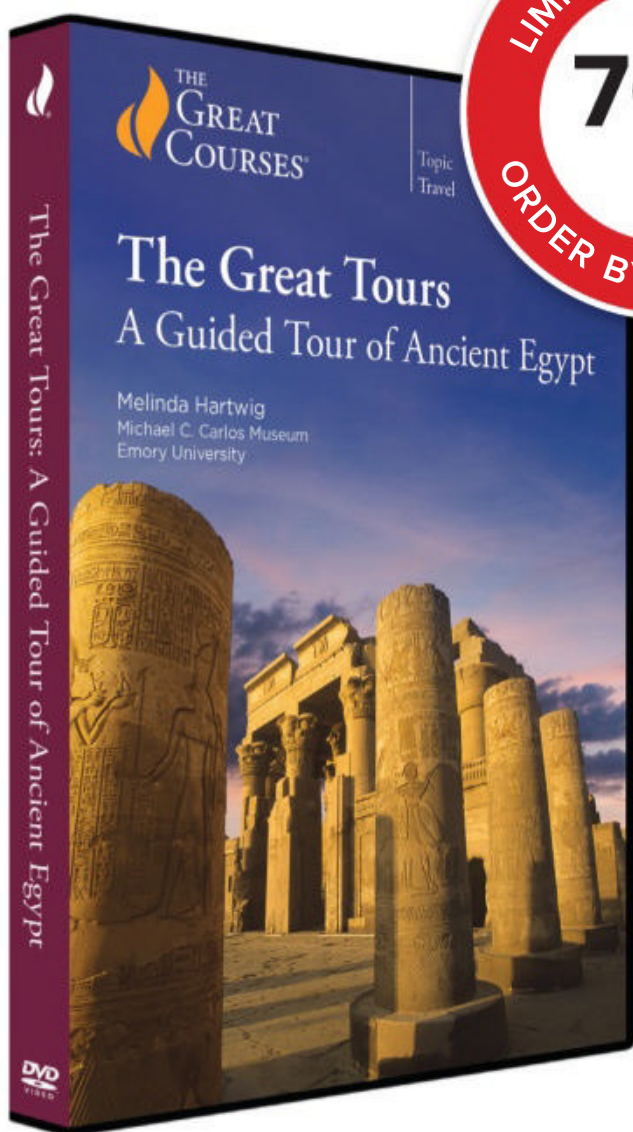
To receive this special offer, use offer code: **BEAD164**

1.800.556.7376 or visit [ross-simons.com/beat](http://ross-simons.com/beat)



scan here to visit





# Uncover the Secrets of the Ancient Egyptians

The wonders of ancient Egypt have lured tourists for thousands of years and enthralled millions of people. In this richly detailed video tour, Egyptologist and curator Melinda Hartwig walks you through an extraordinary range of the most stunning sites, taking you deep inside the pyramids, tombs, temples, palaces, and dwellings of the ancient Egyptians.

In *The Great Tours: A Guided Tour of Ancient Egypt*, you'll explore the rich panorama of ancient Egyptian history, art, and culture, as you discover the origins of the Egyptian pyramid; delve into Egyptian cosmology through the Amduat—as well as other religious texts; relive the elaborate mystical rituals of the royal Opet festival; explore the Great Temple of Amun-Re at Karnak, and the vast memorial temple of Amenhotep III; learn in detail how the ancient Egyptians lived and died, at sites such as the workmen's village of Deir el-Medina; and much more.

**Offer expires 11/02/21**

**THEGREATCOURSES.COM/8NGH**  
**1-800-832-2412**

## The Great Tours: A Guided Tour of Ancient Egypt

**Taught by Melinda Hartwig**

**MICHAEL C. CARLOS MUSEUM, EMORY UNIVERSITY**

### LESSON TITLES

1. Exploring the Gift of the Nile
2. The Major Museums of Cairo
3. How to Build a Pyramid
4. The Great Pyramid: The Last Ancient Wonder
5. The Great Sphinx and the Giza Plateau
6. The Step Pyramid: Djoser's Stairway to Heaven
7. The Capital at Memphis and the Saqqara Tombs
8. Old, New, and Late Saqqara
9. Saqqara's Famous Fifth-Dynasty Tombs
10. King Sneferu and the First True Pyramid
11. Power and Revolution: Beni Hasan and Amarna
12. Akhenaten's City at Amarna and Hermopolis
13. Abydos: The Religious Center of Osiris
14. The Temple of Hathor at Dendera
15. The Temple of Amun-Re at Karnak
16. Luxor Temple and the Opet Festival
17. Royal Tombs in the Valley of the Kings
18. Valley of the Queens and Workmen's Village
19. The Colossi of Memnon and Hatshepsut's Temple
20. Theban Tombs: The Necropolis of Nobles
21. Ptolemaic Temples of Edfu and Kom Ombo
22. The Ancient Egyptian Frontier: Aswan
23. The Temples at Philae and Abu Simbel
24. Alexandria and the Lost City of Tanis

**The Great Tours: A Guided Tour of Ancient Egypt**  
Course no. 80020 | 24 lessons (30 minutes/lesson)

**SAVE UP TO \$190**

**DVD** ~~\$269.95~~ **NOW \$79.95**

**Instant Video** ~~\$234.95~~ **NOW \$59.95**

+\$10 Shipping & Processing (DVD only)

and Lifetime Satisfaction Guarantee

**Catalog Code: 194938**

For over 30 years, The Great Courses has brought the world's foremost educators to millions who want to go deeper into the subjects that matter most. No exams. No homework. Just a world of knowledge available anytime, anywhere. Download or stream to your laptop or PC, or use our free apps for iPad, iPhone, Android, Kindle Fire, or Roku. Over 800 courses available at [www.TheGreatCourses.com](http://www.TheGreatCourses.com).